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The Representation of Athens and Sparta in Charles Rollin's *Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians*

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Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation into how the French historian and pedagogue, Charles Rollin, represents the classical city-states of Athens and Sparta as sources of exemplary moral lessons in his *Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians*. The *Ancient History* is visibly marked by concerns for a host of issues that had contemporary significance for Rollin. Perhaps most notable among these is the idea of luxury as a morally corrupting force. I will argue that Rollin takes a selective approach to his representation of Athens and Sparta in order to offer a set of moral examples—communicated through certain individuals and political institutions—which act as foils for the moral depravity he perceived around him. Athens and Sparta thus emerge as useful reference points for the moral issues of the day and, at a time when the study of Greek history was traditionally neglected, acquire a new, topical familiarity.

Authors Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific references in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Jack Rogers DATE: 07/11/2019

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1. Introduction

> 'Is it better for an empire to be brilliant and short-lived, or virtuous and lasting?'

At first, this quote from the author of the *Social Contract* appears to be playing off the natural metaphor of the life-cycle to ask, in the context of empire, whether we should prefer ephemerality to longevity.[1] To be sure, this is what Rousseau is asking, but why? What was the historical significance of his query? More specifically, what was self-evident about the association of the 'brilliant' with the 'short-lived', and the 'virtuous' with the 'lasting'? The answers to these questions lie in a matrix of polemic and debate relating to the nature of modern commerce, which was unique to eighteenth-century France. A pervasive theme in many of the discourses on commerce produced during this period was the idea of luxury. Readily perceived by contemporaries as the source or symptom of France's ever-multiplying ills, luxury was a common theme around which critiques of a burgeoning commercial society were structured. Crucially, this was not strictly an Enlightenment obsession. The idea of luxury had a history of critical interpretation stretching as far back as Plato and the Stoics and it is this tradition that pre-packaged the associations Rousseau is drawing on; between brilliance and ephemerality, virtue and longevity.[2] But the historical dimension of his question is twofold: not only was he drawing on an associative framework with a well-known ancient pedigree, he was also tacitly drawing on ancient history itself to lend substance to this distinction between the 'brilliant and

[1] This quote is from Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* (1750) and has been taken from: Shovlin. 2006. p. 24.
[2] For an excellent philosophical account of ancient perceptions of luxury, see: Berry. 1994. pp. 43-98.

short-lived', and the 'virtuous and lasting'. From the seeming equivocality of Rousseau's question emerge the faint outlines of high-minded Sparta and opulent Athens.

Rousseau's admiration for Sparta and his antipathy towards Athens are well-known. This dissertation will be looking at the representation of these ancient polities in the *Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians* of Rousseau's less prolific contemporary, Charles Rollin. It is clear from several other works, such as archbishop Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus*, that contemporary authors did not need to declare luxury the primary subject of their text to deal directly with the concept and its attendant issues. The same is true of the *Ancient History*. Penned and published at a crucial juncture in the so-called 'luxury' debate—between the publication of Fénelon's *Telemachus* in 1699 and Jean-François Melon's *Political Essay on Commerce* in 1739—where we witness a general shift from criticism to apology, it is representative of a general concern for the cause, nature, and effects of luxury in civilised societies.

We need only look at the title of Fénelon's highly influential work, *The Adventures of Telemachus,* to see the central role the ancient world played in the formulation of new ideas for and about modern French society. Both *Telemachus* and the *Ancient History* were written at a time when France's connection with the ancient world was fiercely contested, and this spirit of criticism extended to classical theories of luxury, too. As the rapid influx of foreign goods from European colonies made luxury more conspicuous, the explanatory limits of the ancient model of luxury—born of a wholly different commercial context—were exposed. At roughly the same time, the 'Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns' famously pitted the literary achievements of Louis XIV's France against those of antiquity.[3] Often interpreted as a highly polarised affair between Ancient and Modern parties, Larry Norman has shown how the views

[3] For a highly comprehensive anglophone account of the Quarrel see: Norman. 2001.

expressed by proponents on both sides of the Quarrel are wrongly made to conform to a neat dichotomy of two opposing camps.[4] But despite opinions being varied and shared across party lines, there remained fundamental points of difference. Where Ancient partisans drew on ideas from Renaissance humanism to claim the utility of ancient morality (read civic virtue), the self-styled Moderns inveighed against this tendency with increasingly nationalist arguments, passionately vowing to wrest French literature from what they perceived as the oppressive normativity of ancient models.[5] The luxury debate operated along similar divisions; notions of virtue—whether ancient civic, modern secular, or religious—and nationalism were frequently invoked to support a variety of agendas. Critics, for instance, extended the ancient argument that luxury acted as a solvent for crucial social ties founded on a shared morality of virtue, whereas others viewed it as a necessary catalyst for the formation and perfection of new, explicitly modern, French forms of virtue and sociability.[6] Across both the luxury debate and the Quarrel, then, the ancient world emerges in consistent opposition to ostensibly modern modes of thought. It also functioned as a crucial reference point for intellectuals whose aim was, broadly speaking, to assess the merits and demerits of their contemporary situation.

The *Ancient History* thus touches on several different, but not unrelated contexts that hint towards its potential for increasing our understanding not only of the eighteenth-century luxury debate, but also of eighteenth-century perceptions of Athens and Sparta and their place in ancient historiography. First, it deals with two ancient polities that would later, as our quote from Rousseau implies, come to represent the two historical extremities of attitudes towards luxury. Second, it emerged at a time when the question of luxury's relevance to eighteenth-century France was, for various reasons to which we will return, particularly topical. And third,

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[4] See: Norman. 2001.
[5] I use the word 'passionately' following Norman's assertion that the sentiments that sparked the Quarrel were most often phrased in highly emotive terms of shock and revulsion.
[6] The idea that luxury corrodes shared notions of morality can be found in: Berry. 1994. pp. 45-62, pp. 63-86; Hont. 2006. pp. 279-418.

it was produced in a context where the cultural authority of the ancient world was being questioned and rearticulated. This dissertation will ask what place these contemporary intellectual developments had in Rollin's thought. And, in turn, how they might have affected his representation of two ancient polities that might seem at first to be neatly, if not diametrically opposed in their attitudes towards luxury. What we will see is that Rollin was acutely sensitive to his contemporary intellectual developments, and that the *Ancient History* contains a compound idea of luxury which is the result of an interaction between ancient and modern moral perspectives.

In this dissertation I will aim to explore luxury's position in Rollin's assessment of Spartan political institutions and certain Athenian statesmen. I will also aim to show how luxury fits into Rollin's wider moralising program and functions as a touchstone for the moral precepts Rollin deems exemplary. My approach in conducting the research for this dissertation can be described as outside-in. That is to say, it was my aim to familiarise myself with specific aspects of Rollin's context—for instance, the political, intellectual, and social milieu from which concerns about luxury emanated—before undertaking an in-depth analysis of the *Ancient History*. This, I hoped, would make it easier to identify elements in Rollin's work that indicate an engagement with luxury as a contemporary issue. This explains the prominence these contextual concerns are afforded throughout this dissertation: researching them in-depth was necessary not only to understand how Rollin's work relates to its historical and intellectual context, but also to acquire a knowledge of how to identify luxury's presence in a work where direct references to it are sparse by acquainting myself with the relationships formed between luxury and a host of different ideas by other contemporary thinkers.

In the forthcoming discussion first I will provide an overview of Rollin's life and works, followed by a survey of the scholarship produced on Rollin over the past two centuries. Then, building on similarities between the fictionalised societies of François Fénelon's *Telemachus*

and the Lycurgan Sparta represented by Rollin, in 'Political Institutions' I argue that comparable value judgments about the ideas that should inform political institutions suggest a shared ideological perspective in which luxury poses a moral problem that must be curbed by political power. In 'Rollin's Sparta and Fénelon's *Telemachus*' I offer a brief introduction to the latter work as well as the justification for my comparative approach. In 'the morality of commerce' I explore how an anxiety about commerce, and luxury as its concomitant, feeds into Rollin's praise for the reforms of Lycurgus, namely his prohibition of travel and war at sea and his prohibition of the use of gold and silver money. I then submit my own argument that Rollin commends these reforms not only because they serve to instil and encourage virtue, but also because they are representative of an insular moral and political ethos sensible to the dangers of unbridled commerce. In 'luxury, conquest, and despotism' I attempt to show that in Rollin's critique of conquest and despotism he forms associations with vices he elsewhere associates with luxury. I then suggest that these common associations might indicate a link between Rollin's critique of conquest and despotism on the one hand, and his critique of luxury on the other. In 'agriculture, virtue, and equality' I analyse the relationship between the explicit position Rollin adopts on agriculture in an appendix to the *Ancient History* and his critique of Lycurgus' equal division of lands and institution of public meals. Here I make the case that Rollin regarded a healthy agricultural system as commensurate with virtue, going on to make my own argument that Rollin praises Lycurgus' equal division of land amongst Sparta's citizens because it promoted an atmosphere of equality that effectively eradicated the need for luxury. In the subsequent chapter, 'Individuals', I move away from political institutions to examine how luxury fits into Rollin's moral characterisations of certain Athenian politicians. In 'luxury in public and private spheres at Athens' I analyse the criteria Rollin employs to make judgments about the morality of the prominent Athenian statesmen Pericles, Alcibiades, and Cimon. I then argue that Rollin offers moral characterisations of these individuals in

accordance with the criterion that they should be judged on their ability to place public interests before their own, and that his critique of luxury is reinforced through its association with the private motives he condemns in these individuals.

Overview of Rollin's life and works

Rollin's life, along with much of his work, has been largely forgotten. Here I will trace some of the events and processes that shaped it because they can give a clearer understanding of the personal and social influences that shaped his outlook on both luxury and the ancient world.

Rollin was born on the 30th of January 1661, in what is today the 4th arrondissement of Paris.[7] In the late 1660s he began to help with mass at the nearby Benedictine monastery of Blancs-Manteaux. A friar at this monastery perceived his intellectual capabilities and helped secure him a place to study philosophy and the humanities at the collège de Plessis. Here, Rollin attracted the attention of Marc-Antoine Hersan, professor of rhetoric, under whom Rollin is said to have excelled. After completing rhetoric, he studied philosophy for two years. Rollin admits in his own educational treatise, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres,* that he failed to fully apply himself in this area.[8] Indeed, there are moments in the *Ancient History* which betray an outright contempt for philosophy, particularly that of the Athenian sophists. He did, however, retain an interest in natural and moral philosophies, which he believed to be useful in forming an individual's virtue, charity, and piety.[9] This kind of practical approach to learning characterises much of the *Method of Teaching*, and virtue is a quality Rollin keenly ascribes to Athenian and Spartan institutions and individuals he deems worthy of praise. After two years studying philosophy, he enrolled in the Sorbonne to study theology, where he finished his formal education in 1683 at the age of twenty-two.

In the same year, Rollin was asked to succeed Hersan to the chair of rhetoric at Plessis, which he initially declined, then accepted in 1687. In 1688, he accepted the chair of eloquence

[7] Ferté. 1902. p. 3.
[8] Charles Rollin. 1803.
[9] Ferté. 1902. p. 9.

at the collège royale and was asked to deliver a panegyric for Louis XIV. The comparison Rollin draws in this speech between Louis and the Roman god Jupiter conforms to the parallels with ancient deities favoured by the monarchy at this time.[10] He delivered this speech just before the publication of Claude Perrault's *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* in 1687, which would ditch these kinds of positive parallels in favour of comparisons that asserted the extent to which Louis had surpassed, rather than matched, the achievements of antiquity's great figures. Over the course of his studies Rollin developed a profound knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin. Apparently, whilst he was studying theology at the Sorbonne, he would voluntarily transcribe lectures delivered in Latin directly into Greek.[11] He was also reported to have had a copy of one of Plutarch's *Lives* on him at all times, which makes it no surprise that Plutarch emerges as the most frequently cited Greek source in the *Ancient History*.[12]

In 1693, Rollin left his post at Plessis and, accompanied by Hersan, he made his first trip to the famous Jansenist monastery of Port-Royal.[13] Here Rollin became acquainted with theologians Jean-Jacques Duguet and Jacques-Vincent Bidal d'Asfeld, and presumably with the religious doctrine of the Jansenists, the moral doctrine of which would come to affect his interpretation of luxury and the ancient world. The following year, he was elected to the role of rector at the University of Paris. The expenses of Louis' various wars had squeezed the funding available to France's educational institutions, leaving them strained. Rollin took it upon himself to restore the prestige of the university by carrying out a series of reforms that revived old practices and introduced new ones. For instance, he abandoned the practice that required students to put on plays. Rollin appears to have despised theatre, and classical Athenian playwrights receive, like the Sophists, harsh and frequent criticism in the *Ancient*

[10] Norman. 2011. pp. 89-98.
[11] Ferté. 1902. p. 12.
[12] Ferté. 1902. p. 11.
[13] Ferté. 1902. p. 17.

History. He also required that applicants to professorships had to provide a 'certificate of morality'. Rollin's conduct as rector reflects an assiduity of character and a persistent concern for moral rectitude which, as we will see, plays a central role in his assessment of both Athens and Sparta, and luxury more generally.

Sometime in 1694 he reluctantly accepted the office of coadjutor at the collège de Beauvais where, over the next fifteen years, he avidly pursued a program of reform. To encourage a productive atmosphere amongst the various faculties, he held weekly conferences at his house with the college's lecturers and professors where they would read passages from Holy Scripture and Latin authors. He also, in accordance with the views he later outlined in the *Method of Teaching*, promoted teaching in French rather than Latin. Though he was always at pains to cultivate an atmosphere of piety and virtue, his affinity to Jansenism, which placed a particular emphasis on these qualities, never led him to institute a Jansenist catechism at Beauvais.[14] However, his involvement with Pasquier Quesnel—Jansenist theologian and moralist whose *Reflexions morale sur le nouveau testament* was condemned by the papal bull *Unigenitus* in 1713—produced a scandal which led, in 1712, to his loss of office at Beauvais. During the 1700s, Rollin had invited Quesnel to visit the college and had asked him to give mass in the college chapel.[15] Then in 1707, he gave teaching positions to two known Jansenist members of the clergy. This had aggravated Rollin's colleagues and members of the French parliament. His friendship with the then president of the parliament, Claude le Peletier, served to momentarily keep him in office. Shortly after, Louis XIV's new personal confessor, the Jesuit Michel le Tellier, persuaded Louis to force Rollin out of Beauvais. Given that the Jesuits were Jansenism's most avid critics within the Catholic church (and the French parliament), it seems plausible that it was le Tellier who pressured Louis to act. Rollin left the college on the

[14] Ferté. 1902. p. 52.
[15] Ferté. 1902. p. 56.

6th of June 1712, and though disgraced, was now at liberty to pursue his own intellectual projects.

The next year he began his abridged translation of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, subsequently published in 1715. The promulgation of *Unigenitus* in 1713, which condemned the work of Quesnel, Rollin's known associate, seems to have exacerbated Rollin's personal situation. Jansenist persecutions continued throughout the regency of Philippe d'Orléans, but despite the resulting difficulties, the first two editions of the *The Method of Teaching* were published in 1726, followed by the final two in 1728.[16] Shortly after, in 1730, the first two volumes of the *Ancient History* appeared, followed by another two in 1733, and then the final four between 1735 and 1737. Between 1737 and his death, he began work on his *Roman History*, which was finished and published posthumously by his disciple Jean-Baptiste Crévier. On December 14th, 1741, Rollin died at his home in Paris at the age of eighty-one.

Morality and Jansenism

Considering that luxury was, for the ancients as well as Rollin's eighteenth-century contemporaries, an essentially moral issue, it is important that we appreciate the moral outlook of Jansenism because of its potential implications for the judgments Rollin is forming about luxury, its place in Athens and Sparta, as well as the nature and value he ascribes to these polities. Famous for an ascetic lifestyle of spiritual contemplation—the result of a sceptical view of earthly society—and its unsparing interpretation of Augustinian theology, it is hardly surprising that the religious doctrine of the Jansenists implied a rigid moral framework.

Jansenism takes its name from Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), or 'Jansenius', who was professor of theology at the university of Louvain and the bishop of Ypres between 1636-1638.

[16] Ferté. 1902. p. 70.

His 1640 treatise *Augustinus* became Jansenism's founding text. It focused on the nature of divine grace, and in it Jansen followed a stringent reading of St. Augustine that argued for the notion of an efficacious grace. At the heart of this reading was an insistence on 'the full gravity of Adam's fall and the consequent total corruption of human nature'.[17] The resulting 'gulf between Creator and creature',[18] and the question of its severity dominated the theological debates of the Catholic renewal.[19] According to Jansen's rigidly Augustinian interpretation, man's inadequacy before God and his inherent capacity to sin could never be fully overcome. As a counter-measure to this irreversible tendency towards sin, God bestowed an efficacious grace on select individuals. These individuals, it is held, retained an exclusive, divinely-ordained ability to think and act unrestrained by the pull of earthly temptations. This enabled these individuals to act in accordance with the Commandments out of a true love for God, rather than out of fear of divine punishment—something the Jansenists persisted in condemning. Jansen and many later Jansenist theologians, particularly Blaise Pascal, held a view of man that was utterly pessimistic. 'According to eternal and impenetrable decrees fully understood only by himself'[20], God allocated the grace necessary to supersede a fundamentally debased human nature. In an interpretation of grace where Adam's disobedience erased any latent human potential for escaping damnation, the emphasis fell on man's total dependence on God for salvation. From its beginnings, Jansenism insisted that the gulf between creator and creature was severe, and that God alone controlled any passage over it.

The fundamental depravity of man after the Fall did not preclude the need for proper moral conduct in this corrupted state. In fact, quite the opposite. It was precisely the severity of Adam's actions that demanded the sedulity of the succeeding generations. At the core of

[17] Van Kley. 1975. p. 9.
[18] O'Connor. 2011. p. 319.
[19] O'Connor. 2011. p. 320.
[20] Van Kley. 1975. p. 9.

virtually all Jansenist moral precepts is the idea that weight of the Fall can never be completely overcome. It was thus the proper task of morality to mitigate against man's inherent degeneracy. The most important conceptual touchstone for understanding Jansenist, indeed any form of morality in seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries France is the idea of *amour-propre*, or self-love. Typically, self-love was opposed to true Christian charity, which facilitated worldly actions out of a pure and genuine love for God rather than out of a love of self. Self-love was generally regarded by the Jansenists as the source of infected worldly virtues, so they taught 'men to avoid reasonable acts of social utility in the pursuit of charity'.[21] It comes as no surprise then that the most avid Jansenists—men and women such as Angélique and Antoine Arnauld, Blaise Pascal, and the abbé Saint-Cyran—inhabited small, ascetic communities outside the realm of normal social life.

Chantal Grell has already noted that the *Ancient History* is visibly marked by religious concerns.[22] Though Rollin often articulates his religious aims through explicit references to divine providence, the Jansenist moral framework I have briefly sketched here also makes an implicit but important figure throughout his work. As we will see, Rollin's highly sceptical position on luxury seems to be an extension of this distrust of human nature to act virtuously in the face of earthly temptations. However, this pessimistic attitude must be reconciled with the didactic aims of the *Ancient History*. Rollin held a firm belief in the potential of good example to act as a counterbalance to humanity's inherent moral deficiencies. The pessimistic views he seems to have taken from Jansenism thus significantly inform the entire *raison d'être* of his historical project. The emphases Rollin chooses to make on the moral qualities of certain institutions and individuals are designed to be instructive: they show the ways in which it is possible to act virtuously despite our inherent degeneracy.

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[21] Keohane. 1980. p. 263.
[22] Grell. 1995. p. 877.

Reputation and historiography

Though highly praised at the time of its publication, the *Ancient History* has received comparatively glancing treatment by modern scholarship. This neglect is partly explained by the fact that some scholars have focused mainly on Rollin's contribution to pedagogy, as opposed to ancient history. Marcel Grandière, for instance, places the *Method of Teaching* among the works of other great religious pedagogues of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Pierre Coustel and Jean Croiset. Grandière argues that it represents a systematic, but not always innovative synthesis of contemporary Jansenist attitudes towards education.[23] In his book on Louis de Fontanes, Norbert Savariau offers a separate study on the theory for the teaching of poetry which Rollin elaborates in the *Method of Teaching*.[24] In Gilbert Py's *Rousseau et les éducateurs,* Rollin the pedagogue appears occasionally, but only as a prop in a comparative study of Rousseau. A host of other historians, including W.S. Howell, George Campbell, Alexander Vinet, Alain Michel, and Barbara Warnick have focused on the ideas that Rollin developed on rhetoric and eloquence in the *Method of Teaching*.[25]

However, in recent years Rollin the historian has made an appearance across a variety of historical studies which I will now summarise. In Chantal Grell's voluminous work *Le Dix-Huitième Siècle et l'antiquité en France*, for example, Rollin appears in a systematic analysis of ancient history's relationship with eighteenth century France.[26] Grell offers a wealth of information on the relationship between classical learning and a near-exhaustive set of contemporary social, political, economic, religious, and cultural contexts. Grell contends that

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[23] See: Grandière. 1998. pp. 52-61.

[24] Savariau. 2002. pp. 341-56.

[25] See: Warnick. 1985. pp. 46-7; Warnick. 1995. pp. 173-82.

[26] Grell. 1995. pp. 4, 7-17, 21, 23-5, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34-5, 39-41, 54, 56-8, 60, 61, 67, 68, 77, 82, 85, 87, 88, 98, 99, 103, 104, 155, 200, 290, 305, 344-6, 348-50, 352, 353, 449, 452, 557, 629, 641-42, 701, 822, 866, 877-82, 886, 893, 901-2, 906, 978, 980, 982-97, 999, 1009, 1012-15, 1016, 1017, 1037, 1051, 1052, 1105, 1109, 1116, 1173.

Rollin interpreted ancient history as a series of exemplary scenes that, properly presented, could furnish individuals with a reliable framework for making moral judgments.[27] Finding him to be somewhat 'a prisoner of his passion for antiquity', Grell notes that Rollin tends thus to emphasise the moral bankruptcy of his own century, and situates him within a tradition of Christian moralists, alongside Fénelon, who privileged history's moral utility over concerns about factual veracity.[28] In Grell's final analysis, though forcefully marked by concerns to attune antiquity to the march of Providence and assert the superiority of Christian precepts, the *Ancient History* represents an early step in the process, later developed by Montesquieu and Voltaire, of the secularisation of ancient history.[29]

In his article 'Treatments of Spartan land tenure in eighteenth and nineteenth century France: from Francois Fénelon to Fustel Coulanges' in *Spartan Society*, Paul Christesen explores Sparta's place in contemporary debates about the role of private property. Charting Sparta's many incarnations in the property theories of a range of French thinkers spanning almost two centuries, Christesen shows how Sparta and its system of land tenure were appropriated to support competing conceptions of the nature and utility of private property. He argues that Sparta emerged as a referent in this debate as a result of social, political, and intellectual processes that helped overcome limitations hitherto placed on Sparta's capacity to act as a model polity. Christesen identifies one such development as 'the insertion of Sparta into a longstanding debate about the merits and dangers of luxury' but ignores Rollin's role in introducing Athens and Sparta to this debate, instead ascribing that honour to Jean François Melon.[30] He does not point out, as Rosso, Winston, and Macgregor-Morris do, that many eighteenth-century French thinkers derived much of their information about Sparta from

[27] Grell. 1995. p. 41.
[28] Grell. 1995. *Ibid;* p.992.
[29] Grell. 1995. p. 877; p. 881.
[30] Christesen. 2012. p. 173.

Rollin's work.[31] Christesen's article therefore neglects Rollin's contribution to the related debates over luxury and private property and is an example of a study which marginalises Rollin in favour of thinkers, like Melon, whom intellectual history has tended to regard as virtuosic and originative.

In 'Spartans and savages: mirage and myth in eighteenth-century France' Michael Winston offers a detailed survey of Sparta's various permutations in contemporary French thought. He shows how the 'mirage' of Spartan moral exemplarity—constructed either through positive comparisons with Native American societies or through analyses which treat Sparta as an independent historical phenomenon—was defended or refuted by thinkers with divergent political views. Here Rollin is presented as an early proponent of the tendency, adhered to by a line of subsequent French intellectuals, to treat Sparta and its institutions as a properly historical phenomenon. Winston holds that for Rollin Sparta's historical value lay in the moral lessons to be learned from its institutions and the conduct of its citizens, and he recognises that in this respect Rollin owes much of his moral analysis to Plutarch's *Lycurgus*. Despite his adoption of well-trodden moral perspectives from ancient writers, Rollin deploys certain modern characterisations. For instance, the use he makes of Lycurgus' land redistribution reform to assert the inviolability of individual property rights prefigures the position later taken up by the Physiocrats against Mably's insistence that Sparta represented a communal property regime. For Winston, Rollin occupies a foundational position: in the *Ancient History* we can discern the basic axes along which subsequent discussions of Sparta and its institutions will develop and operate.

In 'The paradigm of democracy: Sparta in Enlightenment thought' Ian Macgregor-Morris examines the relationship between analyses of the Spartan political system by its

[31] Rosso. 2005. p. 237; Winston. 2012. p. 114; Macgregor-Morris. 2004. p. 343.

modern proponents and the concurrent development of a democratic tradition in Enlightenment thought. Deconstructing the classic juxtaposition between Spartophiles and liberals, Macgregor-Morris argues that the mixed-constitutional perspective of the Spartan political system offered by Mably, and the limited version of Athenian direct democracy advocated by Cornelius De Pauw, converge on the liberal concept of representative democracy. Rollin's importance here is once again foundational. Macgregor-Morris points out that where Rollin's praise for Spartan institutions follows a coherent internal logic supported by ancient source material, his criticisms correspond to a concern for highlighting topical social problems while demonstrating the superiority of Christian morals in dealing with them.[32] However, Rollin's contemporising critique resonated less with later thinkers than his praise for certain elements of the Spartan system: Mably rejects Rollin's criticisms, adopting his positive appraisals and developing them in order to make the case that sovereignty resided with the people at Sparta. Macgregor-Morris thus presents Rollin's analysis as influential in the formation of an interpretive tradition around Spartan institutions which viewed them as essentially democratic.

In 'British Sparta in the Age of Philhellenism', Oswyn Murray aims to trace conceptions of Sparta in popular histories, offering a systematic survey of the works—these are not exclusively British—which altered the shape of Sparta in the British imagination. Here Rollin receives cursory treatment and is situated in a wide arc of interpretive transformation where over the span of two odd centuries Sparta shifts from being idealised as a moral utopia into occupying a place of subordinate antagonism with the then preferred commercial model of Athens.

In his article, 'Sparta and the French Enlightenment', Haydn Mason provides an author-by-author account of Sparta's rise to prominence in Enlightenment in thought. Here

[32] Macgregor-Morris. 2004. p. 342.

Rollin and Montesquieu appear alongside as thinkers whose detailed discussions of Sparta laid the groundwork for later interpretations. He notes that Rollin's praise for Lycurgus is partly limited by his Christian dogmatism, and he accepts Grell's contention that Rollin can to an extent be regarded as participating in the development of a new, secularising form of historiography. Mason does not, however, go into any great detail on the specificities of Rollin's contribution, instead asserting that he can be regarded as the intellectual precursor to Mably, whom Mason sees as Sparta's first true Enlightenment apologist.

In her monograph *La Renaissance des institutions de Sparte dans la pensée Française (XVIème – XVIIIème siècle)* Maxime Rosso analyses Rollin's presentation of Spartan political institutions. Rosso argues that Rollin's most fervent praise is reserved for Sparta's mixed constitution and shows how the deficiencies of the Spartan system highlighted by Rollin represent practical inadequacies and therefore do not detract from his more overt praise of the grand principles behind Lycurgus' reforms.[33] If Rollin's account of these reforms was commonplace then, Rosso argues, his moral assessment of them constitutes the more important and influential aspect of his work. Rosso also points out that we should be careful not to characterise Rollin as exclusively Laconophile: he also reserves sympathy for the softness and versatility of Athens, qualities which produced its invaluable contribution to the arts and sciences.[34]

Finally, another interpretation of Rollin's historical works can be found in a short article by William Gribbin, where he discusses the place of the *Ancient History Romaine*, and the notions of republicanism it contains, in the context of North America's post-revolutionary politics.

[33] Rosso. 2005. p. 239.
[34] Rosso. 2005. p. 243.

There remain, however, only two dedicated monographs on Rollin: Henri-Louis Ferté's biographical *Rollin, sa vie, ses œvres et l'université de son temps* (1902), and Albert Charles Gaudin's *The Educational Views of Charles Rollin* (1939). The former title is a useful synthesis of the available biographical material from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the latter is a now dated attempt at a comprehensive account of the educational program found in the *Method of Teaching*. Analyses of his work on pedagogy are well attested throughout the twentieth century, and where ancient history is concerned, modern scholarship has viewed Rollin's contribution as an important one, but often secondary to subsequent authors. Both interpretive trends, apart from Ferté's and Gaudin's monographs, tend either to view Rollin in relation to a better-known figure or in relation to larger ideas and processes.

The latter approach certainly has its merits but also carries the danger of sacrificing the uniqueness of Rollin's efforts to apparently higher, thematic purposes. This trend is understandable given that the *Ancient History* is a highly scrupulous, thirteen volume work that demands a great deal of time, effort, and care to analyse exclusively and in its entirety. However, it is possible to suggest that Rollin's obscurity is the result of more than simple academic pragmatism. In the nineteenth century Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, the famous historian of the Jansenist movement, wrote that Jean Charles Léonard de Sismondi was 'the Rollin of French history'.[35] What Sainte-Beuve was intimating was that, much like Rollin's efforts in ancient history, Sismondi's efforts in French history were well-intentioned but insignificant. We find that within just a century of his death Rollin had become a byword for irrelevance and forgettability. This contrasts with the favourable reputation we know he enjoyed during his life and for a short period after his death. So why, and when, the change?

To be sure, until relatively recently there was more scholarship on Rollin in French than in English. On the English side there has been a more demonstrable lacuna. Translations of the

[35] Chisholm. 1911. p. 159.

Method of Teaching and the *Ancient History* abound up to the end of the nineteenth century, then there are few mentions of Rollin by scholars until Gaudin's 1939 monograph. As Gribbin shows in his article, Rollin's historical works were well known to nineteenth century Americans. Rollin figures more consistently in French scholarship, with his works enjoying popularity in France throughout the 1800s. The *Method of Teaching* was reprinted on at least five separate occasions, then in 1902 Ferté published his biography.[36] Theodore Besterman's establishment of the Voltaire Foundation at Oxford in the 1950s, and its subsidiary publication series *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (SVEC) has gone some way in increasing available scholarship on Rollin, furnishing us with the works of Grell and Savariau.[37] It is only in the last twenty or so years that both French and Anglophone studies of Rollin's historical contribution have abounded, predominantly in the field of the modern reception of Sparta and its institutions. Yet, the works of Ferté and Gaudin remain to this day the only dedicated monographs.

We might ask whether Sainte-Beuve's epithet, which portrays Rollin as an admirable but relatively unimportant figure in the canon of eighteenth-century French literature, has simply stuck and become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another, indeed one that might seem to come naturally, would be that comparatively little has been written of Rollin because there is in fact little to say. In this dissertation I hope to show that this is not the case. Yet even if it were, the publication of the *Ancient History* represents an important leap. It was, as Rollin himself observes, the first attempt in the French language to write a comprehensive history of classical antiquity. Moreover, Rollin wrote the *Ancient History* in French with the intention of reaching a wider, younger audience. In comparison with the vast numbers of

[36] Detailed figures for the publication of new editions and translations of the *Traité* over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be found in: Savariau. 2002. p. 341; Warnick. 1985. p. 49.
[37] Useful comments on the *Method of Teaching* can be found in: Savariau. 2002. pp. 341-56; Pujol. 2005. pp. 43-4.

specialist Latin treatises on antiquity that had been produced over the previous four centuries, the *Ancient History* was unprecedentedly accessible. By the time of its publication in the 1730s, the only analogue in another European language was Temple Stanyan's *Grecian History*, published in 1707, which Rollin almost certainly drew on.[38]

Given that he was far from a recurrent, let alone peripheral Enlightenment intellectual, it comes as no surprise that nothing has been written on Rollin's position on luxury. Since the 1980s, the resurgence of scholarly interest in the eighteenth-century luxury debate has been pushed forward by the review of works by better-known contemporaries. The familiar figures of Montaigne, Fénelon, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Melon, Voltaire, Diderot, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, and of course, Adam Smith, loom large in most monographs, chapters, or articles on luxury produced over the past thirty years. After all, these are the individuals whose views on luxury and economy have been privileged by the intervening three-hundred odd years of intellectual history. They therefore deserve treatment as a key part of the reception of these ideas.

In his monograph *The Political Economy of Virtue*, Shovlin remarks that much of the work carried out on perceptions of commerce and its cognates in eighteenth-century France remain 'within a tradition of intellectual history that focuses on a small number of writers distinguished by their virtuosity'.[39] This leads scholarship to exclude thinkers of a seemingly lesser calibre on the grounds that their work, though it may be making use of the same categories and logics used by more 'sophisticated' thinkers, is simply 'deploying a version of an intellectual paradigm expressed more articulately by others'.[40] This shrewd judgment can and should be extended to justify an examination of what Rollin's position in the luxury debate can tell us about his broader contribution to ancient historiography. The merit of this approach

[38] Payen. 2015. p. 161.
[39] Shovlin. 2006. p. 4.
[40] Shovlin. 2006. *Ibid.*

lies in its ability to account for what might be construed as conventional and shared, rather than innovative and discrete, modes of thought. Rollin's tendency to adopt and redeploy pre-existing views from a variety of contemporary and ancient sources—in other words, his lack of virtuosity—is, as we will see, precisely what is interesting about his position on luxury and the ancient world.

2. Political Institutions

In the *Ancient History*, political institutions function as a crucial medium for Rollin's expression of ideas about luxury and ancient history. They first appear in Book V in a section titled 'The History of the Origin and First Settlement of the Various States and Governments of Greece'.[41] In 'Article VII' of this section, Rollin examines key Spartan institutions introduced by Lycurgus. These are the senate, the division of lands, the prohibition of gold and silver money, and the public meals. He also devotes a subsection to 'other ordinances', where he discusses the Spartan education system, Spartan leisure, their preoccupation with war, the prohibition of travel and foreign visitors, some aspects of Lycurgus' life, and his aversion to the ancients' condonement of suicide. Rollin then enters into his evaluation of these Spartan institutions, which is divided into two subsections titled 'Things Commendable in the Laws of Lycurgus' and 'Things Blameable in the Laws of Lycurgus', where he offers a series of moral judgments and prescriptions. Rollin returns to Spartan political institutions in Book X, which is devoted to a study of Greek manners and customs. In the first chapter of this book, titled 'Of Political Government', Rollin offers an 'Abridged Idea of the Spartan Government', followed by an analysis of what he sees to be its primary characteristics: submission to the laws and love of poverty. This is followed by a comparison with the laws of ancient Crete, which are presented as the model for those of Sparta. Sparta appears once more in the third chapter of Book X titled 'Of War', where Rollin assesses comparatively the various military merits of Sparta and Athens before devoting a section to 'The Common Character of the Lacedaemonians and Athenians'.

The judgments that Rollin confers on these institutions are pertinent to his position on luxury. As John Shovlin has argued, the eighteenth-century debate 'had at its heart a

[41] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, pp. 205-27.

modernised and economised version of the ancient problem of luxury'.[42] Classical assessments were resoundingly negative and stemmed from a more general depreciation of economic life typically opposed to the virtues of military service and agricultural subsistence.[43] Plato believed it weakened the martial values on which the security and survival of the *polis* depended.[44] Roman moralists extended this idea and gave further weight to the association between 'opulence and government instability' by applying it to their own history.[45] Luxury, and the ambition, envy, and competition it was seen to foster, was a crucial rhetorical ingredient in Sallust's and Livy's depictions of Rome's degeneration from a virtuous republic to what they saw as an increasingly and inherently tyrannical regime.[46] In the classical perspective the problem posed by luxury was therefore both moral and political: it was inimical to the state because it distracted individuals from their public duties by the pursuit of private wealth, and this deviation was most commonly construed as the product of a moral deficiency either induced or exploited by luxury. The rhetorical nexus constructed between luxury, corruption, and political authority was retained by critics, like Fénelon and Rollin, who deployed classical republican arguments against a new breed of economically oriented thinkers keen to claim for luxury a host of social, moral, and economic benefits.

The 'modernisation' of the classical position on luxury was multi-faceted and complex, and though Shovlin's assertion that the ancient problem of luxury was modernised is certainly correct, we must recognise that the term 'modernisation' is problematic. It implies that eighteenth-century responses to luxury can adequately be understood as the re-appropriation of pre-existing classical ideas, when in fact novel perspectives inhered in the inversion, if not outright rejection, of classical arguments in favour of allegedly superior 'modern' ones. As

[42] Shovlin. 2006. p. 5.
[43] Frasier-Terjanian. 2013. p. 31.
[44] Berry. 1994. p. 60.
[45] Berry. 1994. p. 87.
[46] Berry. 1994. p. 91.

Anoush Frasier-Terjanian notes, 'to the extent that luxury was understood to be an urgent moral and political crisis, eighteenth-century writers construed this crisis as a consequence of a change: the advent of a new, commercial society'.[47] In addition to vast changes in environmental circumstances, which naturally necessitated new modes of thought, the intervening centuries of social, political, and economic theorising between classical antiquity and eighteenth-century France had seen the birth and development of several rich intellectual traditions that provided new paradigms through which luxury could be assessed. The distinction made between public and private forms of virtue in the social theory of Montaigne was perhaps most portentous. It would enable apologists like Bernard Mandeville to label arguments in favour of a modern analogue of the public-oriented ancient civic virtue as outdated and chimerical, instead arguing that private interests could stimulate a dynamic form of economic growth, the benefits of which would be reaped by the public. It could certainly be argued that the very existence of a distinction between public and private virtue would prove damaging to luxury's critics precisely because it implied a rejection of the assumed unity between public and private integral to the ancient notion of civic virtue. Though there is evidence to suggest that Rollin was aware of such distinctions, his implied support for the benefits of ancient (read Spartan) civic virtue suggests a profound disagreement with the contention—popular among luxury's apologists—that private vice could be excused if it served ostensibly public interests.

Before we continue, it is important to address the problem posed by the relative paucity of Rollin's direct references to luxury. In the *Ancient* History luxury does not receive any treatment in its own right either as an abstract concept or as a specifically historical phenomenon: there is no subsection, chapter, or article devoted to it. Across Rollin's discussions of Spartan institutions in Books V and X luxury is referred to explicitly on five

[47] Frasier-Terjanian. 2013. p. 30.

occasions and, crucially, is consistently employed in a pejorative sense. Here we can often extrapolate luxury's pejorative meaning from its grouping with other adjectives, practices, or behaviours that carry negative connotations of their own. This has been my approach to the following groupings: 'effeminacy and luxury'; 'luxury, avarice, lawsuits, and dissensions'; 'insolence, envy, fraud, luxury'; 'luxury and disorder'.[48] In these cases we find luxury grouped with traits typically condemned in the Christian moral tradition—like effeminacy, insolence, envy, and avarice; with practices like fraud and lawsuits which might be interpreted as socially injurious, though for lawsuits this link is perhaps more tenuous; and with the clearly undesirable outcomes of disorder and dissension. These basic associations, I argue, provide an adequate starting point to suggest that Rollin deploys luxury pejoratively.

For the other two direct references to luxury in Books V and X we must turn to the wider context in which they are being made to assess whether Rollin is deploying luxury in a pejorative sense.[49] In the first case, the suppression of luxury, alongside profusion and magnificence, is described as a guiding principle of Lycurgus' reforms: 'to this entire submission to the laws of the state, Lycurgus added another principle of government no less admirable, which was to remove from Sparta all luxury, profusion, and magnificence'.[50] Here Rollin's qualification of the principle of banishing luxury as admirable implies a disapproval of luxury. In the second case, 'luxury and love of riches' are described as returning to Sparta upon Lysander's later reintroduction of gold and silver money:

[48] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 211; p. 214; p. 398; *Ibid*.
[49] It is of course always important to situate Rollin's references to luxury within their wider context, the above is merely to say that in some cases its connotations are more obvious.
[50] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 398.

> 'Lysander, though incapable himself of being blinded or corrupted with gold, filled his country with luxury and the love of riches, by bringing into it immense sums of gold and silver, which were the fruit of his victories, and thereby subverting the laws of Lycurgus'.[51]

Here luxury's meaning is dependent on the admiration we saw Rollin express earlier for Lycurgus having the banishment of luxury as a guiding principle of his reforms. In this context, the subversion of these reforms and the concomitant return of luxury imply that Rollin regards luxury as at the very least undesirable.

For the few direct references that Rollin does make to luxury, then, we can unpack their meaning by examining their context on two levels: first, by appreciating the meaning of the adjectives, notions, and phrases it appears alongside and what its association with these might imply; and second, by considering how Rollin's references to luxury fit into his wider assessment of Lycurgus' reforms. Here it is important to note that when discussing Spartan institutions Rollin's direct references to luxury are mostly derived from Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, where luxury figures as one of the targets of Lycurgus' reforms. However, this does not necessarily mean that Rollin's attitude to luxury can completely be understood as an accidental by-product of his replication of his source material. As I have mentioned above, the reiteration of classical—particularly Roman moralist—critiques of luxury was a tactic employed by luxury's eighteenth-century detractors. Rollin's decision to stick with Plutarch's narrative and its negative characterisation of luxury is, I would argue, significant because it suggests an approval of that characterisation.

Rollin's approach to luxury is nonetheless oblique and difficult to define. Drawing out the associations mentioned above can help clarify Rollin's position on luxury by establishing a lexical field of words, phrases, and ideas related to luxury which can then be used to infer

[51] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 214.

that luxury's involvement extends beyond direct references to it. This approach is supported by my comparative study of Fénelon's *Telemachus*, which represents a much more explicit critique of luxury than Rollin's work. Focussing on the similarities between Rollin and Fénelon, whether in their diction or moral message, makes it possible to suggest that they are engaging, despite some differences, in an interchangeable critique of luxury and its associated issues, though Fénelon is more emphatic. In his study of the role of luxury in Herodotus' political thought, Kurt Raaflaub outlines the necessary conditions for an argument that is based on subtext and the presence of implied, rather than literal meaning to stand up. The theme in question must be demonstrably topical for the original audience and parallels from other writers must also be possible.[52] As we have seen in our case, in Rollin's contemporary setting, at least among writers and intellectuals, luxury was fast becoming a subject of debate. The prominence of luxury in Fénelon's *Telemachus*, published in 1699 some decades before the appearance of the first volumes of the *Ancient History,* attests to this. As does the publication, just one year after of that of Rollin's final volume, in 1739 of J.F Melon's 'Political Essay on Commerce' where he famously attempts to define luxury. I would argue that these considerations make an analysis of luxury's role and position in the *Ancient History* plausible.

In this section I will argue that Rollin's representation of Spartan institutions, and the emphases it contains, extends to a critique of the incapability of French institutions to curb luxury. I will argue that this representation colours Spartan institutions in a way that alters the readers' perception of Sparta as a historical model by comparing and contrasting the Sparta presented by Rollin with the fictional societies of Fénelon's *Telemachus*, traversing common themes of commerce, conquest, and agriculture.

[52] Raaflaub. 1987. p. 235.

Rollin's Sparta and Fénelon's *Telemachus*

Fénelon's *Telemachus* was perhaps the most powerful critique of luxury to emerge from the first stages of the eighteenth-century debate. Written for the Duke of Burgundy to whom Fénelon was appointed royal tutor by Louis XIV, it is set in a Homeric world and charts the travels of the son of Odysseus, its eponymous hero. Here Fénelon sets up what Istvan Hont has described as 'a tripartite model of the history of luxury' by describing three separate states each possessing a different relationship to luxury.[53] First, Fénelon has Telemachus learn of Boetica, a 'fertile country' whose inhabitants have 'no foreign commerce…[and] no occasion for money'.[54] Their way of life is simple, frugal, and virtually apolitical. They subsist on a purely agrarian economy and reject all physical and social manifestations of inequality. Telemachus later arrives in Salentum, a magnificent but decadent state corrupted by luxury. From the outset it is described in opulent terms: 'every day, every hour, it became more magnificent, and exhibited to those at a distance on the sea new ornaments of architecture towering up to heaven.'[55] Telemachus is then instructed on how best to reform Salentum. The central features of this program of reform are the maintenance of peace, the promotion of agricultural activity, the encouragement of a disinterested attitude, and the suppression of luxury. In its reformed state, Salentum has banished luxury while remaining virtuous without resorting to the isolationist, pre-commercial, comparatively primitive state-formulation of Boetica.

The Sparta we find in Rollin's *Ancient History* bears striking similarities to some aspects of the societies of Fénelon's *Telemachus*, specifically Boetica and reformed Salentum. For instance, they share an emphasis on the importance of an education in cultivating a nation of virtuous citizens, a rejection of forms of ostentation that might contribute to inequality, and

[53] Hont. 2006. p. 283.
[54] Fénelon. 1994. p. 109.
[55] Fénelon. 1994. p. 119.

an aversion to 'superfluous arts', to name a few. Though it is difficult to posit direct influence between these two authors with absolute certainty, we know that Rollin and Fénelon travelled in similar intellectual circles having both attended the collège de Plessis. Albert Chérel has shown Fénelon's influence on Rollin's pedagogic thought and if we can regard, as Chantal Grell has, the *Ancient History* as Rollin putting the views articulated in the *Method of Teaching* into narrative form then it is certainly possible that Rollin may have actively inserted elements of Fénelon's thought into his work. In any case, that similarities do exist provides adequate grounds to adopt a comparative approach because, though working through the different mediums of fictional literature and historical narrative, both appear to be engaging with the same categories and associations that permit them to offer a negative assessment of luxury. Comparing Rollin's Sparta with the fictional societies of *Telemachus*—a work famed for its penetrating critique of absolutism and the French social order—can thus help draw out the topical significance of Rollin's representation of Spartan institutions.[56]

The morality of commerce

Assessments of the value of commercial activity in eighteenth-century discourse were often anchored in concerns about the nature of its relationship to morality and, more specifically, to virtue. Within such assessments, luxury could figure as either a natural, sometimes desirable concomitant of commercial society or as a dangerous permutation to be avoided at all costs. As Frasier Terjanian notes, discourse around commerce in the eighteenth-century often betrayed an ambivalence about its beneficial or destructive potential.[57] The idea of ambivalence can help unpack the simple dichotomies around which the historiography on

[56] Shovlin describes Fénelon's thought as 'a vital political legacy of the following century'; Shovlin. 2006. p. 21.
[57] This is the central thesis of: Frasier-Terjanian. 2013.

commerce and luxury typically operates; between *doux commerce* (gentle or sweet commerce) and its implied alternative; between corrupting and productive forms of luxury. At first glance, the idea of commerce we find in Rollin may seem beset by contradictions. As we will see, this is in fact a reflection of not only an anxiety about France's changing socio-economic landscape, but also of the extent to which Rollin understood commerce, and the attendant issue of luxury, as multifaceted.

One striking similarity between Fénelon and Rollin is a shared concern for emphasising the importance of instilling and maintaining an insular moral and political ethos sensible to the dangers posed by commerce. I would argue that the very presence of this similarity, if not an indication of intellectual debt, is a reflection of the extent to which luxury was perceived as an immediate issue. It also suggests that Fénelon and Rollin were drawing on similar ideas to confront it. We find, for instance, that common to both authors is the notion that too much, or unregulated exposure to foreign manners poses an immediate threat to morality and therefore had to be legislated against. We find various sets of precautionary measures—in apolitical Boetica these seem to take the form of shared attitudes rather than formal institutions—designed to shield a shared moral code from the incursions of foreign manners. Fénelon describes Boetica's inhabitants, for instance, as reluctant to be taught the art of navigation by the Phoenicians:

> We have often offered to teach them navigation, and to carry their young men with us to Phoenicia; but they would never consent to their learning to live in our manner. They would…thereby learn to want whatever has become necessary to you. They could not dispense with them; and would therefore abandon the path of virtue, and take indirect methods to obtain them. They would become like a man who had good legs but who, by not using them, and being carried around like a sick man in a chair, thinks at last that he

> cannot live without that convenience. As for navigation, they admire the ingenuity and industry of it, but think it is a pernicious art.[58]

For his part, in Book V, under article VII, titled 'The Spartan Government', Rollin relates how Lycurgus banned Spartans from travelling abroad in order to preserve their virtue:

> It was hard for men, brought up in the midst of so many living precepts and example, not to become virtuous, as far as heathens were capable of virtue. It was to preserve these happy dispositions that Lycurgus did not allow all sorts of persons to travel, lest they should bring home foreign manners, and return infected with the licentious customs of other countries, which would necessarily create in a little time an aversion for the mode of life and maxims of Lacedaemon.[59]

Here we can note an important distinction. The passage from Fénelon is concerned with the danger of teaching navigation to Boetica's inhabitants, whereas Rollin is referring to Lycurgus' prohibition of travel more generally, which he claims was a necessary measure to prevent the corruption of Spartan manners. However, despite this difference, we can detect in both passages the idea that exposure to foreign customs can have a deleterious effect on morality. In Fénelon's case, the foreign custom in question seems to be a form of materialism. The analogy of the man who becomes so accustomed to being carried around in a chair, despite being able-bodied, that he eventually cannot dispense with this convenience implies that this materialism results in the elevation of the superfluous to the status of a necessity. Once this process has been established among the Boeticans, they would find it difficult to return to their original form of existence and their morality would be lost or compromised in the pursuit of

[58] Fénelon. 1994. p. 114.
[59] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 212.

artificial needs. Navigation is therefore regarded as 'pernicious' because it might give the Boeticans a taste for foreign goods or practices (it is not clear which of these Fénelon means by 'whatever has become necessary to you') which would lead them to 'abandon the path of virtue'. In Rollin's case, it is not navigation but simple travel to foreign countries that might serve to import 'licentious customs'. Here the 'happy dispositions' and the virtue of the Spartan people are endangered by the incursion of foreign manners, the effect of which would be the inculcation of an aversion to the Spartan way of life. This is precisely the narrative we find in Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, which Rollin has strictly adhered to.[60] However, Rollin's uncritical replication of Plutarch's analysis suggests an endorsement of that analysis which links the introduction of foreign manners with the corruption of Spartan virtue.

Despite discussing different practices, then, both authors are promoting the idea that the integrity of virtue, perhaps even its existence altogether, is dependent on its isolation from foreign customs, and though commerce does not appear here, it is a practice that similarly and necessarily involves a certain degree of contact with foreigners and foreign goods, if not their customs. But in order to show that Rollin associated commerce, at least in the case of Sparta, with the corruption of virtue, we must turn to a later section of the *Ancient History*.

At the start of Book X, titled 'The Manners and Customs of the Greeks', in the chapter 'Of Political Government', under the heading 'Love of Poverty Instituted at Sparta' Rollin again addresses the idea that contact with foreignness could serve to import undesirable manners. When citing the prohibition of navigation and maritime warfare as one measure Lycurgus took to ensure a highly militarised Spartan populace would not succumb to the lures of imperialism and expansionism, Rollin relates that an appreciation of the dangers of commerce might also have informed this decision: 'the situation of his city, and the fear lest commerce, the usual source of luxury and disorder, should corrupt the purity of the Spartan

[60] Plutarch. 1998. p. 36.

manners, might have a share in this prohibition'.[61] Though here a fear of the effects of commerce is secondary to Lycurgus' primary motive of preventing his citizens from making foreign conquests, it is significant that Rollin chooses to include it as a possible motive because we find no such suggestion in Plutarch. I would therefore argue that this anxiety about the potentially harmful effects of commerce is more that of Rollin than that of Lycurgus. The identification of political institutions as a source of luxury was a pervasive feature of the eighteenth-century debate, and in transposing an anxiety about commerce onto the motives that shaped one of Lycurgus' institutions, Rollin is participating in this trend by presenting luxury as a political problem.[62] This is not only evidence of the extent to which Rollin believed commerce was an issue that required emphasis and exploration, but it also carries an assumption about the relationship between political authority and virtue.

Commerce and the attendant spectre of luxury were political in nature precisely because they posed a threat to virtue. In Book X under the heading 'Of Political Government' Rollin states it is the foremost task of any ruler to employ 'all the means and helps (*sic*) that may contribute to making them virtuous'.[63] This is why he admired Lycurgus' aim of banishing from Sparta 'all luxury, profusion, and magnificence': because it was a clear and exemplary demonstration of political authority fulfilling its duty to cultivate the virtue of its citizens. Fénelon certainly shared this expectation: the reform of Salentum was necessitated by Idomeneus' (Salentum's king) neglect. He had failed to take the essential steps needed to 'train them [his citizens] up to virtue'.[64] In reforming Salentum, Mentor's regulation of commerce is a key part of his aim to 'retrench that pomp and luxury by which the morals of a people are corrupted'.[65] This expected political stewardship of morality was meaningful within a

[61] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 398.
[62] Shovlin. 2006. p. 7.
[63] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 396.
[64] Fénelon. 1994. p. 158.
[65] Fénelon. 1994. p. 163.

hierarchical conception of human affairs that was deeply authoritarian. The citizen base, characterised by Rollin as 'capricious' and 'inconstant', and by Fénelon as 'corrupt' and 'deceitful' clearly could not be trusted with safeguarding their own morals. The emphasis we find here on a ruler's culpability in the moral conduct of his citizens can be read as a call for the restoration of virtue in public life. Rollin, like Fénelon before him, is deploying this classical notion in a swipe at the French monarchy's failure to prevent the moral decadence of its people.

Tacking a concern about commerce and the related issue of luxury onto the motives Plutarch describes as shaping Lycurgus' reforms subtly sharpens the example provided by Sparta to fit a wider negative assessment of luxury as the product of ill-conceived commercial policy. The economic outlook of Louis XIV's financial minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert could be read as a direct violation of the expectation, shared by Fénelon and Rollin, that political authority had a duty to ensure the moral integrity of its subjects. Sometimes identified as mercantilist, Colbert's economic program saw wealth as the true source of national power. In relentlessly encouraging manufacture and commerce as a means of enriching the state, it left little room for the kind of 'political moralising characteristic of the language of luxury; virtue was largely irrelevant to the wellbeing of the political community'.[66] Crucially, Colbert sought to demonstrate that using commerce as a means to acquire national wealth actually helped foster desirable moral dispositions.[67] For critics like Fénelon and Rollin this was a folly, a dangerous conceit that masked the avaricious designs of a monarch bent on aggrandising himself at the expense of his subjects' welfare.

Furthermore, the importance placed by both Fénelon and Rollin on the need for severe regulation around commerce might lead us to suggest they thought virtue to be fragile and

[66] Shovlin. 2006. p. 20.
[67] Shovlin. 2006. p. 6.

liable to disintegrate at the slightest whiff of foreign seductions. But it is less the fickleness of virtue than the potency of luxury as a destroyer of virtue that is being alleged here. For Rollin this was part and parcel of his religious interpretation of human nature. Jansenists were adamant that Adam's Fall meant that man's capacity to do good—to act virtuously— was severely diminished. This entailed a profound distrust of human nature. The frailty of man's poorly calibrated innate moral compass meant that proper morality could only be instilled through the meticulous teaching and observance of patterns of behaviour aimed at fostering that morality. This is one of the overarching aims of the *Method of Teaching*, showing that though Rollin was sensitive to this need, he was also acutely aware that many of his contemporaries lacked the proper moral tools to discern between 'true and false, good and evil, solid greatness and vain ostentation'.[68]

The close association Rollin forms between luxury and commerce might also lead us to the assumption that he viewed them as inseparable. In an appendix to the *Ancient History* titled 'The History of the Arts and Sciences of the Ancients', in the subsection 'Of Commerce' Rollin writes he believes commerce to be 'the most solid foundation of civil society, and the most necessary principle to unite all men, of whatever country or condition they are, with each other'.[69] Why, then, does commerce figure as 'the usual source of luxury and disorder' in Rollin's discussion of Lycurgus' reforms? In 'Of Commerce' Rollin acknowledges that commerce 'has its inconveniences and dangers'.[70] He believed commerce was an important corollary of divine Providence, linking disparate peoples and ensuring that 'no country is barren'.[71] Fénelon likewise believed that commerce, if properly maintained, could be a force for good: reformed Salentum retains its port, where trade is conducted in a morally sound

[68] Rollin. 1803. p. 232.
[69] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 360.
[70] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 372.
[71] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 360.

fashion. It is important to recognise that Fénelon does not make Salentum revert to Boetica; he clearly did not believe that the example it provided was a viable alternative for a modern-style state that had opened its doors to commerce. We might ask whether Rollin presents Sparta in similar terms: does he believe it represents the embodiment of a morally admirable but unrealistic policy aimed at dealing with luxury? His assertion in 'Of Commerce' that any ruler worth her salt will 'spare no pains to make traffic flourish and succeed…without difficulty' suggests that he did.[72]

Here it is important to note that antiquity was rarely, if at all, seen as an alternative to monarchy during the first half of the eighteenth-century.[73] Rollin sits firmly in a tradition of Christian moralists fascinated by Spartan virtue and love of poverty. Fascinated, but not to the point of suggesting that the institutions which embodied those values should be reinstated.[74] He saw monarchy as the form of government 'most universally received and established, the most proper to maintain peace and concord'.[75] As Peter Campbell notes, 'opposition came from the defence of interests within the regime and was not fundamentally opposed to it ideologically'.[76]

That contemporaries like Rollin were reluctant to entertain the possibility of France ever becoming a republic does not, however, mean that ancient republics like Sparta could not acquire value in other ways. Some remarks from the *Method of Teaching* will help clarify Rollin's position. He believed that history was above all the study of 'morality and virtue'.[77] He also claims in his discussion of the Spartan government in Book X that the most 'essential part of history, and that which it concerns the reader most to know, is that which explains the character and manners as well of the people in general, as of the great persons in particular, of

[72] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 372.
[73] Grell. 1995. p. 57.
[74] Grell. 1995. p. 58.
[75] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 209.
[76] Campbell. 2011. p. 28.
[77] Rollin. 1803. p. 231.

whom it treats'.[78] For Rollin, these 'manners' made up morality. As Shovlin notes, '*moeurs* [manners] was a key word in the moral and political discourse of eighteenth-century Europe because many moralists saw in such moral dispositions a substitute for a civic virtue that was difficult to sustain in the conditions of commercial modernity'.[79] In the perspective of this moral program, that Sparta could not provide a political alternative to modern France is not the point. For Rollin, the formal aspects of Spartan institutions were incidental to the moral gestures that informed them. That Lycurgus' institutions made little room for commerce, which we know Rollin regarded as an important aspect of a government's policy, did not mean that there was nothing of note in his attempts to form institutions designed to curtail its adverse effects.

Fénelon has Telemachus exclaim that 'to such a degree are we spoiled and corrupted, that we can hardly believe that a simplicity so agreeable to nature is anywhere to be found. We regard the morals of such people as entertaining fables'.[80] It is interesting that Rollin, in a striking passage from Book X, actually addresses the idea that the example of Sparta, in its absence of 'all luxury, profusion, and magnificence'—a function of, among other measures, its rejection of commerce—could be seen as a mere chimera:

> Was the poverty to which Lycurgus reduced Sparta, and which seemed to prohibit to that state all conquest, and to deprive of it all means of augmenting its force and grandeur, well adapted to render it powerful and flourishing? Does such a constitution of government, which till then had no example, nor has since been imitated by any state, evince such a great fund of prudence and policy in a legislator? …It seems, if we consult only the common views of human prudence, that it is just to reason in this manner; but the event, which is an infallible evidence and arbiter in this place, obliges me to be of a quite different

[78] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 396.
[79] Shovlin. 2006. p. 22.
[80] Fénelon. 1994. p. 114.

> opinion. Whilst Sparta remained poor, and persisted in the contempt of gold and silver… she was still powerful and glorious.[81]

It might seem that Rollin's admission that 'the event' being 'infallible evidence' is contradictory to his belief in the supremacy of the lessons to be derived from the study of moral actions, rather than facts. For Rollin, the Spartan example is a remarkable instance where the very fact of its 'flourishing' existence in the absence of commerce and luxury is instructive because it is far from coincidental. It shows how prudential policy-making, informed by a maxim which Rollin asserts in *The Method of Teaching*, that it is 'the highest pitch of virtue to bear up nobly under poverty', can act as an effective bulwark against the decay of virtue when applied to policy-making.[82] 'The event', in this case, is a moral one. Sparta signals the triumph of a moral outlook, expressed and confirmed through the success of an institution in maintaining a state in a seemingly impossible balance: between power and glory, on the one hand, and virtue, on the other, and this is where the force of the Spartan example resides.

Luxury, despotism, and conquest

Fénelon and Rollin both fuse their negative assessment of luxury into a wider critique of the despotic exercise of political power. As with commerce, the urgency of this critique is couched in its topicality. Many of the exigencies of Louis XIV's long reign could easily have been perceived as needless. Louis was clearly dissatisfied with the extent of the territories he had gained during the first half of his reign, and in fabricating an endless stream of claims for and sometimes occupying lands on the French frontier he attracted the antagonism of other

[81] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 398.
[82] Rollin. 1803. p. 235.

European powers, for which France would pay a high price in the eighteenth-century.[83] Also, his revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685—which deprived French Protestants of the toleration they had been granted by Henri IV in 1598—and his prolonged hostility towards the Jansenists had fostered a violent culture of religious persecution and fear. To make matters worse, the innumerable *ad hoc* financial measures his administration adopted to cope with a never-ending stream of conflicts were met with fierce resentment across the social spectrum. In short, poverty and inequality persisted while Louis seemed bent on aggrandising himself at the expense of his subjects' welfare. Even large swathes of the nobility felt insecure. Louis' bellicose military aggressionism, his reckless attitude to domestic policy, and his obsessive cultivation of his own prestige—the construction of his massive palace at Versailles was perhaps the most blatant expression of his vanity—came across as increasingly vainglorious and self-interested.

To today's observer, it might seem somewhat ironic (yet hardly surprising) that contemporaries were confounded by the arbitrary abuse of power under a form of monarchy that has since been labelled 'absolute'. 'Since' being the operative word here. But it is important that we do not take Rollin's advocacy of monarchy as the best form of government as inherently contradictory to his critique of despotism. Rather, despotism was for monarchy what luxury was for commerce: a reprehensible aberration of an otherwise valid concept. It was common for luxury's critics to argue that its tendrils extended to the highest rungs of power. Indeed, a defining feature of classical arguments was the idea that luxury was at its most dangerous when it motivated individuals in positions of political authority.[84] As we will see, Fénelon and Rollin viewed conquest as a needless, often ruinous exercise, and in the dangers they identify with conquest and despotism luxury is never far around the corner. Both

[83] Doyle. 2001. p. 182.
[84] Shovlin. 2006. p. 18.

authors suggest links between luxury, despotism, and conquest, which might have had an air of prescience at a time when Louis' catastrophic failure to annex the Spanish throne loomed large in recent memory.

In Sparta and Salentum, despotism is represented as a peripheral, but very real threat, and the dangers of such abuses of power are frequently addressed. In Book X when discussing Sparta's political situation prior to Lycurgus' reforms, Rollin states that 'whether from pride and the abuse of despotic power on the side of the kings, or the desire of independence and an immoderate love of liberty on that of the people, Sparta, in its beginnings, was always involved in commotions and revolts'.[85] Similarly, despotism is never realised in Salentum, but a clear understanding of the threat it posed is a key element of Mentor's didactic program of reform: 'remember that the countries where the power of the sovereign is most absolute are those where the sovereigns are least powerful. They take, they destroy what they please, and the whole state is their property'.[86] This idea that it is the laws, as opposed to the ruler, that must be absolute is echoed by Rollin in Book X:

> The reason of this constancy and stability of the Lacedemonians in their government and conduct is, that in Sparta the laws governed absolutely, and with sovereign authority; whereas the greatest part of the other Grecian cities, abandoned to the caprice of private individuals, to despotic power, to an arbitrary and irregular sway experienced the truth of Plato's saying: that the city is miserable, where the magistrates command the laws, and not the laws the magistrates.[87]

[85] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 397.
[86] Fénelon. 1994. p. 170.
[87] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 397.

As we have seen, both Fénelon and Rollin believed an important function of good legislation to be the suppression of luxury by any means possible. It is therefore significant that Rollin links the apparent disorder that preceded Lycurgus' reforms to the despotic exercise of power because it shows that curbing or eradicating despotism was at least an effect, if not an intention of Lycurgus' reforms. It is possible to suggest that from an early stage, then, luxury and despotism are linked insofar as they both figure as important targets of Lycurgus' legislation. We might add that Fénelon and Rollin's preference for legislative agendas conceived as a unified whole suggests their affinity to Cartesian rationalism, which emphasised the 'clarity of the singular'.[88] Rollin in particular displays his indebtedness to Descartes, who believed that 'if Sparta was once so flourishing, [it is] because [its laws], having been devised by a single person, all tend towards the same end'.[89] Rollin appears to confirm Descartes's dictum when he states that 'there must have been exceeding wisdom in the laws established by Lycurgus for the government of Sparta, because, as long as they were exactly observed, no commotions or seditions of the people were ever known in the city'.[90] The philosophical underpinning of Rollin's assessment of the merits of Lycurgus' institutions arguably also corresponds to his depreciation of despotism as well as to his preference for a civic virtue that united public and private interest in a coherent and self-sustaining whole. In this reading, despotism was morally repugnant because it represented the imposition of a form of rule driven by private desires.

When discussing Spartan militarism in Book X, in the section 'Love of poverty instituted at Sparta' Rollin makes explicit this idea that private vices should not be permitted to determine the conduct of the state:

[88] Norman. 2011. p. 92-3.
[89] Quote taken from: Norman. 2011. p. 92.
[90] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 397.

> The almost inevitable danger of a people solely trained up for war, who have always their arms in their hands, and that which is most to be feared, is injustice, violence, ambition, the desire of increasing their power, of taking advantage of their neighbours' weakness, of oppressing them by force, of invading their lands under false pretexts, which the lust of dominion never fails to suggest, and of extending their bounds as far as possible; all vices and extremes which are horrid in private persons, and the ordinary intercourse of life, but which men have thought fit to applaud as grandeur and glory in the persons of princes and conquerors. The great care of Lycurgus was to defend his people against this dangerous temptation[91]

Here Rollin is remarking that there is a contradiction in condemning private individuals for embodying qualities which invite praise 'in the persons of princes and conquerors'. Luxury was often used as an abbreviation for vices like ambition and avarice, and Rollin's fear of the incursion of private motivations into politics, articulated in this passage, is an application of the Roman argument which viewed the corrupting effects of luxury as a 'result of the desire to attain distinction and power by deceit'.[92] This concern is shared by Fénelon, who has Mentor exclaim that 'those who prefer their vain ambition to the interest and safety of the common cause deserve chastisement instead of recompense'.[93]

For both authors ambition figures as a potent indicator of a dangerous private psychology geared towards the pursuit of personal advantage at the expense of the public good. Whether it was intended to or not, this emphasis would have fallen on particularly receptive ears at a time when individual ambition in French politics was the subject of intense hatred and suspicion. Though retrospectively it might seem easy to conclude that Louis himself was the implied target here, this is not necessarily the entire story, and this would have been convenient

[91] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 398.
[92] Berry. 1994. p. 67.
[93] Fénelon. 1994. p. 156.

for Fénelon and Rollin at a time when criticism of Louis himself was a dangerous undertaking.[94] The French monarchy relied heavily on venality to line its coffers, and a favourite target of luxury's detractors were the intendants (royally commissioned office-holders with a wide-ranging brief to increase state revenue) and tax farmers who collected dues on behalf of the monarchy while charging unregulated rates of interest to fill their own purses.[95] As Shovlin notes, 'the growing concern with luxury [in the eighteenth-century] reflected an associated anxiety over the extent to which [these] financiers had risen to a new position of authority and status'.[96] Such developments were closely associated with Colbert, whom Fénelon detested, because he had given private tax collectors formal, royally-authorised organization; the effect was what Peter Campbell has dubbed 'a privatized modern administration'.[97] Fénelon and Rollin did not need to criticise Louis directly, in allowing his administration to license private avarice in the interests of an avowed public cause (the acquisition of national wealth), he had practically done their work for them. Under Louis' absolute authority corruption always had an easily identifiable source.

Once again, Rollin's Sparta takes on a remedial rhetorical character by implicit contrast with contemporary political and economic developments. Rollin's praise for Lycurgus' reforms is not incidental to the fact that he agrees with Polybius and Plutarch's assertion that one primary aim of those reforms was to curb the ambition of the citizenry.[98] To make things clearer, this approval comes under a subheading titled 'things commendable in the laws of Lycurgus'. As with commerce, the real merit of the example provided by Sparta stems from the ability of its legislator to discern between the moral notions Rollin deems to be either true or false. Lycurgus is as much Rollin's mouthpiece as Mentor is Fénelon's. In creating a hostile

[94] Fénelon's *Telemachus* was published in 1699 without his permission, suggesting he wished it to be published posthumously, perhaps due to its critical nature.
[95] For a general overview of the culture of venality in eighteenth-century France see: Doyle. 1996.
[96] Shovlin. 2006. p. 8.
[97] Campbell. 2011. p. 24.
[98] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 214.

environment toward ambition—a vice that is suggestive of luxury—the Spartan example provides a corrective to 'those false ideas which we are apt to form of the vain greatness of those empires which have swallowed up kingdoms, and those of celebrated conquerors who owe all their fame and grandeur to violence and usurpation'.[99]

The negative associations formed between private ambition and abuses of power that might be construed as despotic, whether they were embodied in the person of a ruler or in lower-ranking officials, provide further grounds for a negative assessment of luxury. In Book V, when discussing Lysander's reversal of Lycurgus' prohibition of gold and silver money—which he perceived as the harbinger of Spartan decline and rarely omits to mention—Rollin claims 'it [the reintroduction of valuable currency] was the consequence of the violation of another law still more fundamental. Ambition was the vice that preceded, and made way for, avarice. The desire of conquests drew on that of riches, without which they [the Spartans] could not propose to extend their dominions'.[100] Avarice was a symptom of ambition, and Rollin's assertion that riches were necessary for territorial gain draws our attention to the relationship between conquest and luxury. War, conquest, and expansionism appear as the concomitants, if not indicators, of a state given over to material gain and luxury. But there is an interesting causal relationship here, too: Rollin seems to be implying that to conquer, one needed riches, but to obtain riches, one had to conquer. They work together in a deadly feedback loop where conquest is both a cause and symptom of luxury, and vice versa.

Rollin's denigration of conquest, like his depreciation of unregulated commerce, emerges in negative relief through an appraisal of Lycurgus' institutionalised protectionism. Where in the case of commerce this protectionism is a function of a rejection of foreign trade and navigation, for conquest it entails a renunciation of expansionism and imperialism. Under

[99] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*
[100] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*

the heading 'Love of poverty instituted at Sparta' in Book X, Rollin makes a point of agreeing with Polybius and Plutarch that Spartan militarism, as instituted by Lycurgus, was intended to ensure that Sparta remained a peaceful autarky:

> So that the design of Lycurgus, in rendering his citizens warlike, and putting arms into their hands, was not, as Polybius observes, and Plutarch after him, to make them illustrious conquerors, who might carry war into remote regions, and subject great numbers of people. His sole end was, that, shut up within the extent of the lands and domain left them by their ancestors, they should have no thoughts but of maintaining themselves in peace, and defending themselves successfully against such of their neighbours as should have the rashness to invade them; and for this they had occasion for neither gold nor silver, as they found in their own country, and still more in their sober and temperate manner of life, all that was sufficient for the support of their armies, when they did not quit their own lands, or the neighbouring territories.[101]

Here we find that for Rollin—who is simply reiterating the views of Polybius and Plutarch—Spartan militarism is justified as a means of consolidating and maintaining, rather than expanding the state. If we consider Rollin's reiteration of this view alongside the link he draws between a desire for conquest and a desire for riches, it is possible to suggest that he might have construed this measure—Lycurgus' militarisation of the Spartan population—as an effective bulwark against luxury. This would also explain why this measure is discussed under the header 'Love of poverty instituted at Sparta' as an integral step towards establishing a society where luxury is absent.

Military protectionism is also a feature of Fénelon's reformed Salentum, through Mentor he articulates his belief that 'a state ought always to be prepared for war in order to prevent its

[101] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 398.

ever being reduced to the disagreeable necessity of engaging in it…Thus by a wise foresight all the preparations for war were seen going on in the midst of a profound peace'.[102] Rollin is likewise adamant that a key aim of Sparta's military ethos is to maintain 'themselves in peace', and this similarity supports the idea that Rollin may have actively transposed some of the principles of Fénelon's *Telemachus* onto his representation of Sparta. The (literal) domestication of Lycurgus' apparently imperialist aims reads not only as a move to make Sparta edge slightly closer to the pacifist model of reformed Salentum, but also as a tacit swipe at the expansionist aggressionism that characterised Louis' reign. The parallels between Rollin's Sparta and Fénelon's reformed Salentum suggest that both authors are engaging in an interchangeable critique of what could have been perceived as the despotic activity of the French monarchy.

Though Rollin does not include luxury among the vices—ambition and avarice—that he associates with conquest and despotism, I would argue that the presence of these vices is suggestive of an atmosphere where luxury could manifest and develop. What links luxury with these vices is a common denominator which seems to be the amoral pursuit of gain. The immorality of ambition and avarice and, I suggest, luxury, resides in the dangerous form of individualism that Rollin identifies as inimical to the public interest. In this way luxury could be seen as compatible with conquest and despotism because, in turn, it is compatible with the vices which Rollin associates with conquest and despotism. It is therefore possible to interpret Rollin's critique of conquest and despotism—which emerges through the admiration he expresses for the steps Lycurgus took to protect his citizens from the temptations they posed—as containing elements which also lend themselves well to a critique of luxury. Rollin's approach here is certainly oblique, and it indicates the nebulous character that luxury takes on throughout the *Ancient History*. If it is clear that Rollin regards luxury, despotism, and conquest

[102] Fénelon. 1994. pp. 165-6.

negatively, it is unclear whether luxury retains a causal or a symptomatic relationship to these phenomena, if at all.

Agriculture, virtue, and equality

The cautionary tone adopted by Fénelon and Rollin regarding activity in the foreign sphere—in the forms of commerce and conquest—acquires further polemical definition through the presence of an explicit alternative: agriculture. As we have seen, both authors keenly express the idea that insularity could provide an effective remedy for a state over-extended by the exigencies of overseas trade and international warfare. To be sure, the use of the term insularity is somewhat problematic with its connotations of wilful ignorance, and though 'isolationism' is technically more accurate, there is evidence to suggest that the kind of spatial, economic retreat Fénelon and Rollin are advocating had designated positive consequences on an international level, too.[103] However, I will continue to use 'insularity' because 'isolationism' presupposes a paradigm in which a nation's affairs are viewed in relation to a patently modern global perspective that takes for granted a certain degree of mutual political awareness, not to mention putatively binding international codes of laws and rights.

In the eighteenth-century context, Fénelon and Rollin's endorsement of the social and political benefits of an agriculturally-oriented national commercial infrastructure, articulated through a preference for historical examples (or in Fénelon's case, fictional examples informed by history) which conformed to this ideal, derived in part from what Shovlin has termed a discernible 'patriotic impulse'.[104] It is not difficult to see how such a sentiment could feasibly

[103] My use of the term 'international' here pertains only to eighteenth-century European powers.
[104] Shovlin. 2006. p. 5.

exist in the minds of intellectuals, like Fénelon and Rollin, who held ancient civic virtue in high esteem not least for its subordination of private to public interests. Calls for moral regeneration, whether secular or religious, were also symptomatic of a growing need to claim patriotism as the antithesis of a highly centralised state seen to rely and capitalise on vice. In a fashion reminiscent of the modern advertisement industry's wanton commercialisation of emancipatory sentiments in popular culture, the French monarchy, whose image had greatly suffered on Louis XIV's account, appropriated this spirit of patriotism to salvage its prestige. This only sharpened the polemical character of calls for the acquisition of national wealth via domestic agricultural means as opposed to the unfettered forms of venality and commerce apparently sanctioned by the monarchy.

Insofar as luxury was widely perceived as a deeply systemic moral and political issue, patriotism provided an effective language through which the enormity of the problem could be addressed, and agriculture was seized on as an effective means to reconstitute French prosperity and morality in a two-way system where one would encourage the other. Scholarship has tended to identify the physiocratic movement as the intellectual milieu from which calls for agricultural revivalism emanated. However, though the physiocrats put such sentiments into highly innovative terms, it is important to appreciate that their privileged place in the study of eighteenth-century French agricultural revivalism stems mostly from the perceived salience of their ideas for the genealogy of classical economics.[105] For their part, Fénelon and Rollin articulated this need for agriculture to be reinstated as a commercial priority through the rhetorically effective mediums of fiction and historical example. Agriculture is just another locus from which the critical nature of their works emerges. For Fénelon and Rollin, the supremacy of agricultural production, if deftly implemented, lay in its elision of the need for an over-reliance on foreign-based commerce for necessary commodities. Though as we know,

[105] Shovlin. 2006. p. 3.

neither Fénelon nor Rollin interpreted commerce as inherently wrong, individuals' moral susceptibility and the accordant potency of luxury as a concomitant of commerce necessitated a considered interpretation of the latter.

Eighteenth-century agricultural revivalism was heralded by the resuscitation of the classical emphasis on the virtue of an agrarian way of life. In the terms of ancient natural philosophy, agriculture was the means by which individuals accessed the materials necessary to satisfy their rudimentary needs. Roman stoic philosophers like Seneca and Epictetus believed that nature provided the truest guide to the proper limits of human consumption. This idea of the natural life effectively served as a normative benchmark against which luxury could be construed as a damaging and needless deviation.[106] Across ancient literary and philosophical traditions, we find that various writers stress the moral benefits of an agrarian economy, linking agriculture to virtue by stressing its importance for the state. Xenophon, for instance, believed agriculture to be the primary function of the *oikos* (household) and the *oikos* in turn to be the irreducible foundation of the state (*polis)*. It followed therefore that 'a strong agricultural economy was vital to the health of the polis.[107] If civic virtue consisted of moral behaviour that benefited the state by upholding a set of social, political, and economic distinctions designed to preserve the *status quo*, agriculture was so strongly associated with virtue because of its importance in ensuring a state's material prosperity.

Fénelon and Rollin are clear that the neglect of agriculture was both a cause and symptom of decadence. In a rare passage in Book V where he submits an explicit critique of his contemporary France, Rollin decries the gentile idleness that leads to the debasement of agriculture as a national priority:

[106] Berry. 1994. p. 53.
[107] Pomeroy. 1994. p. 46.

> This [excessive leisure] is an inconvenience even now but too common among our nobility, and which is the natural effect of their injudicious education. Except in the time of war, most of our gentry spend their lives in a most useless and unprofitable manner. They look upon agriculture, arts, and commerce, as beneath them, and derogatory to their gentility.[108]

This passage appears in Book V a subsection of Rollin's list of 'things blameable in the laws of Lycurgus' titled 'their excessive leisure'. In Sparta's case, Rollin implies that this excessive leisure is linked to their militarism, lack of a cultural sphere of activity, and entrusting the tilling of the land to helot slaves:

> 'he [Lycurgus] left all the arts and trades entirely to the slaves and strangers that lived amongst them, and put nothing into the hands of the citizens but the lance and the shield. Not to mention the danger there was in suffering the number of slaves that were necessary for tilling the land.[109]

It is notable that Rollin makes this distinction. He shows himself aware of the fact that, though Lycurgus equally divided Spartan lands amongst its citizens, these citizens were rentier landowners whose estates were farmed by the helots. However, what Rollin is highlighting here is the danger that a large population of slaves—relied on for farming—might rebel. As we will see, despite these practical inconveniences, what Rollin admires about the Spartan agricultural system is the equality that it fostered.

In Fénelon, idleness is made to contrast with the industriousness of a nation highly engaged in agriculture. For instance, Mentor lambasts Salentum's king, Idomeneus, for having paid little attention to promoting agriculture:

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[108] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 216.
[109] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*

> Your whole attention should have been devoted to agriculture, and the enacting of wise laws. But idle ambition has brought you to the very brink of ruin. By aiming at appearing great and powerful, you have almost destroyed your real power and greatness. Lose no time then in repairing your faults: discontinue all your magnificent structures; renounce that affectation of pomp and grandeur which would ruin your new city; permit your people to enjoy the benefits of peace; and endeavour to introduce plenty among them.[110]

Here Fénelon sets up a series of juxtapositions that oppose luxury and its behavioural cognates to an insular life of peace and abundance. Idleness and ambition are directly linked to luxury, which is presented as a superficial phenomenon that induces nothing but the simulacrum of power and magnificence. We also find the idea that magnificence, presumably in the form of grand public buildings and monuments, was promoted with the specific purpose of projecting an external image of greatness. The spatial connotations here are interesting, too. Insularity, in other words, looking inwards to resolve national issues is directly is opposed to luxury as representative of an obsession with external appearances. As we have seen, Rollin also communicates this idea in his assertion that Lycurgus' real aim in forming many of his policies was to ensure Sparta maintained itself 'in peace'.[111]

Rollin's emphasis on the importance of agriculture is more implicit than Fénelon's. However, that both authors are drawing on similar distinctions to assert what kinds of policies and what forms of moral behaviour are antithetical to luxury provides grounds to entertain the possibility that the two might have shared similar views regarding agriculture. Of all the Spartan institutions Rollin treats, Lycurgus' equal division of lands amongst Sparta's citizens lends itself best to the idea that agriculture was both a virtuous and necessary national priority.

[110] Fénelon. 1994. pp. 152-3.
[111] Fénelon. 1994. p. 399.

> The greater part of the people were so poor, that they had not one inch of land of their own, whilst a small number of individuals possessed of all the lands and wealth of the country; in order therefore to banish insolence, envy, fraud, luxury, and two other distempers of the state, still greater and more ancient than those, I mean extreme poverty and excessive wealth, he persuaded the citizens to give up all their lands to the commonwealth, and to make a new division of them, that they might all live together in a perfect equality, and that no pre-eminence or honours should be given but to virtue and merit alone.[112]

Though Rollin does not mention agriculture explicitly here, he is explicit that equality fosters conditions under which virtue can flourish. These conditions, and indeed virtue, could be taken to contrast with luxury and its attendant vices. But to posit that the kind of equality Rollin is referring to is directly linked to agriculture, we must turn to some of his remarks from a later section of the *Ancient History* titled 'On Agriculture'. Here Rollin clarifies his position on agriculture's utility:

> It is…highly important that the whole land of a kingdom should be employed to the best advantage, which is much more useful than to extend its limits; in order to this, each master of a family…should have some portion of land appropriated to himself; whence it would follow, that this field, by being his own, would be dearer to him than all others, and be cultivated with application; that his family would think such employment their interest, attach themselves to their farm, subsist upon it, and by that means be kept within the country.[113]

[112] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 210.
[113] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 352.

In terms of reception, the similarities between the position Rollin advocates here and his description of Lycurgus' division of lands hints towards one of two possibilities. Either Rollin derived his views on agriculture, in part, from the example presented by Lycurgus' institution, or, his description of the latter is tweaked to fit Rollin's pre-existing views. In fact, these two possibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is certainly possible that Rollin's views were formed through his close study of ancient literature, and that he then read his interpretation back onto his own description of their original source. Rollin believed a regulated, if not equal, division of lands was a necessary function of a properly implemented agrarian economy and, like Fénelon, viewed this regulation to be an important task of the state. The regulated division of a nation's lands amongst its citizens was also a means by which they could be 'kept within the country', reinforcing the idea that institutionalised insularity was an effective way of ensuring prosperity. Furthermore, it provided individuals with a new degree of self-interest: they would cultivate their lands with 'application' because it was exclusively their property. Agriculture could promote an industrious attitude amongst a nation's citizens that would certainly have mitigated against the idleness and inactivity both Fénelon and Rollin condemn. It is important to note that the position Rollin articulates here—that citizens owning their plot of land would lead to productive forms of self-interest—actually represents a polar opposite situation from Lycurgan Sparta where the land belonged to the state and it was the helots, not the citizens, who tended to the estates. However, we must reconcile this with the fact that in Book V Rollin nonetheless includes the equal division of lands among his list of 'things commendable in the laws of Lycurgus'.

At Sparta, Rollin's assertion that the division of lands would lead all to 'live together in a perfect equality, and that no pre-eminence or honours should be given but to virtue and merit alone' indicates he believed that agriculture promoted an atmosphere of social productivity. This productivity, he suggests, would arise out of a self-perpetuating system where, because

conditions were equal, the only means available for individuals to increase their social standing was to attain merit through acting virtuously. One individual's virtue would presumably encourage that of her neighbour, driving society forwards in a positive feedback loop of mutually beneficial moral competition. The state itself would stand to gain because, with agriculture as the promoter of such behaviour, national resources would be ensured with the added benefit of producing virtuous citizens who would rise to higher social and political positions on merit alone. Such a system would elide the need for luxurious forms of over-indulgence in the form of magnificent buildings, banquets and furnishings that individuals could use to attain social distinction.[114] I would argue that this explains why Rollin regards the equal division of lands as praiseworthy: precisely because the division put citizens on equal footing.

That these measures provided grounds for Rollin's praise of Lycurgus is further corroborated by a later remark, where he states that

> the principal attention of the wisest princes, and the most able ministers was to support and encourage husbandry… It is known from never failing experience, that the culture of lands, and the breeding of cattle, which is a consequence and necessary part of it, has always been a certain and inexhaustible source of wealth and abundance.[115]

Lycurgus is praised because he recognised the importance of agriculture in procuring national wealth and insuring the virtuous conduct of citizens. This certainly contrasts with Colbert's economic policy of promoting trade and manufacture at the expense of France's agrarian economic potential. Rollin's assertion that ministers, as well as princes, have a duty to support and promote agriculture appears in fact to be a direct reference to Colbert's neglect.

[114] Berry. 1994. p. 85.
[115] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 352.

Also, in articulating a preference for an agrarian economy founded on the equal division of lands between family units, Rollin pays homage to Xenophon's assertion that agriculture's productive potential derived from its attachment to the household as the key constituent of a state's organisation. In fact, Rollin is explicit that agriculture can be regarded as intimately connected to virtue: 'it is the great advantage of agriculture to be more strictly united with religion and also moral virtue'.[116] This unity between virtue and agriculture was deeply associated with the idea of frugality as an honourable lifestyle. Another of Lycurgus' reforms praised by Rollin is the institution of public meals. In his point-by-point treatment of Lycurgus' institutions—as described in Plutarch—in Book V, Rollin claims this institution is yet another step in Lycurgus' anti-luxury program: 'Lycurgus, being desirous to make war still more vigorously upon effeminacy and luxury, and utterly to extirpate the love of riches, made a third regulation, which was that of public meals'.[117] He continues:

> by this institution of public and common meals, and this frugality and simplicity in eating, it may be said, that he made riches in some measure change their very nature, by putting them out of a condition of being desired or stolen, or of enriching their possessors; for there was no way left for a man to use or enjoy his opulence, or even to make any show of it; since the rich and poor ate together in the same place.[118]

The public meals, like the division of lands, are part and parcel of equality. Rollin seems to suggest that equal conditions can act as a natural bulwark against luxury by effacing the private sphere and therefore any need for indulging in luxury. Frugality is thus naturally opposed to luxurious patterns of consumption which, as we have seen, Rollin regarded as

[116] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 359.
[117] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 211.
[118] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*

driven by private motivations that became most dangerous when they encroached on public life. Here we find further evidence that Rollin admired Lycurgus' institutions precisely because they embodied a morally sound attempt to reduce disparity between public and private spheres. In this perspective, Rollin's claim that Lycurgus was aiming to dismantle inequality neatly corresponds to his preference for a civic virtue that united public and private interests. The idea that frugality was antithetical to luxury was one that Cicero articulated 'in his belief that a man should never seek pleasure, but simply preserve his health and strength'.[119] Frugality implied the absence of avarice, greed, and ambition, because it signified a strict, exclusive adherence to elementary needs. The idea that humans could subsist on a minimal but sufficient personal economy was key to classical devaluations of luxury. Luxury heralded a troubling departure from the natural life which entailed simply following nature's prescriptions. Indulging in luxury was to stray from inherent necessities in the pursuit of goods that were not necessary for basic sustenance. These ideas were central to the classical arguments revived by luxury's detractors in the eighteenth-century, and it is easy to see how Lycurgus' institutions, particularly his division of lands and the public meals, could provide ample historical grounds to assert the validity of these arguments. The public meals were effectively reaping the benefits of a successful agrarian economy made possible by the equal division of lands amongst Sparta's citizens. The Spartan example achieves explanatory power through its confirmation of the idea that a state which prioritises agriculture is a virtuous one. For Rollin, simplicity, frugality, and equality are constitutive of virtue because they all imply a renunciation of deleterious private desires such as avarice and ambition.

In addition to agriculture's positive causal relationship to virtue, both Fénelon and Rollin held that a state's true power lay in the productive potential of its inhabitants. Mentor reminds Idomeneus that

[119] Berry. 1994. p. 66.

> you are only king insofar as you have subjects to govern; and your power is not to be measured by the extent of your territories, but by the number, submission, and attachment of the inhabitants. Let the land which you possess be good, though not very extensive; fill it with great numbers of industrious and disciplined people.[120]

Rollin shares this idea. In 'Of Agriculture' he claims 'the strength of a state is not to be computed by extent of country, but by the number of its citizens, and the utility of their labour.'[121] Both authors are asserting that good politics consists of making proper use of domestic resources. Insularity offered an attractive alternative to unreliable and potentially dangerous forms of external activity, and their contention that national power is not dependent on the 'extent of country' also conforms to their rejection of conquest. Though both authors' conception of virtue carried an emphasis on its wide-ranging benefits for the state, they are also aware that its existence depended on a specific set of circumstances that required controlled political expression.

However, Rollin is clear that these circumstances had their dangers:

> When I place…[this] transaction…among the laudable parts of Lycurgus' laws, I do not pretend it to be absolutely unexceptionable; for I think it can scarce be reconciled with that general law of nature, which forbids the taking away one man's property to give it to another: and yet this is what was really done upon this occasion. Therefore, in this affair of dividing the lands, I consider only so much of it as was truly commendable in itself, and worthy of admiration.[122]

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[120] Fénelon. 1994. pp. 152-3.
[121] Rollin. 1842. Vol. II. p. 352.
[122] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 214.

I would argue that this is essentially a confirmation of Rollin's view that Sparta's specific institutions could not feasibly be transposed into his contemporary France. They were predicated on a forceful imposition of political authority that, for Rollin, was too immoderate. This is one point where Fénelon and Rollin appear to disagree; from Mentor's reform program we can see that Fénelon had no problem with the exercise of arbitrary authority to achieve putatively better conditions. If Fénelon believed that an absolute form of authority was necessary to combat decadence, Rollin seems to advocate the opposite: a grassroots moral regeneration.

It is significant that Rollin believes, despite the offence which brought them about, that Lycurgus' division of lands did have something 'truly commendable in itself and worthy of admiration'. Rollin seems less interested in the discreteness of historical circumstances than he is in their capacity to communicate universally valid moral maxims. For Rollin, Lycurgus' equal division of lands shows how a life of agriculture is commensurate with virtue, but more importantly it serves to vindicate the idea that equality can effectively eradicate luxury. Lycurgus' achievement was to recognise this and make it a guiding principle of his reforms. Luxury is seen to thrive under conditions where reprehensible forms of private desire, like ambition, avarice, and greed are allowed to develop unchecked. In turn, these malevolent forms of moral behaviour are associated with a socially injurious form of individualism that manifests itself as social and material inequality. Once again, it is the moral backcloth of Spartan institutions that Rollin is seeking to emphasise. Lycurgus' division of lands emerges as a historical template that usefully communicates the moral robustness of equality as a principle of government. Rollin thus gives Sparta an identifiably contemporary character; it appears only to show up the faults of a state given over to luxury by providing an instructive example of the moral conditions under which luxury is made impossible.

3. Individuals

Rollin was working in a historiographical tradition that privileged the study of great individuals.[123] There are several reasons for individuals taking centre stage in contemporary histories like that of Rollin. First, 'mirrors for princes'—these were essentially instructive historical handbooks designed to educate royalty and the ruling elite in the art of governance—were somewhat paradigmatic of the historical genre and necessarily focused on the actions and characters of individuals seen to embody qualities worthy of emulation. Though Rollin deviates from this genre by being explicit that his work is intended for a wider audience, the *Ancient History* still adheres in its didacticism to the general aim of 'mirrors for princes'. And second, as Grell claims, biographical works from antiquity made it possible to skirt around the study of political regimes and institutions which inspired no sympathy among many of Rollin's contemporaries.[124] Another factor is Rollin's heavy reliance on Plutarch's *Lives* with its accounts of the lives of many of the individuals who figure prominently in the *Ancient History*. Despite making Rollin's attempt to treat political institutions separately from his narrative of events the more remarkable, these trends still greatly informed the didactic quality of the *Ancient History*. In fact, the pre-eminence Rollin affords to great individuals is a significant example of the customary nature of his work.

However, the qualities and, indeed the individuals themselves, Rollin chooses for moral analysis nonetheless have significance for his representation of the Athenian and Spartan experiences. They provide an effective medium for Rollin to communicate his ideas about what lessons are to be gained from their study, and these individuals are shaped to fit Rollin's moralising program: 'what is said of a kingdom or city, may also be said of individuals.'[125] In

[123] Grell. 1995. p. 449.
[124] Grell. 1995. p. 450.
[125] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 288.

this perspective, the qualities he chooses to highlight seem to have a designated contemporary resonance. We might add that, as a work in the reception of the ancient world, the question of whether the topicality of Rollin's emphases was intended is not necessarily the point. If they were, and there are certainly grounds to suggest that this is the case, the *Ancient History* emerges as an important example of historiography being used as a self-conscious medium of critique. If they were not, that certain topical concerns are identifiable shows not only the extent to which they were pervasive and omnipresent in Rollin's contemporary context, but also lends weight to the idea that historiography has an intimate relationship to its temporality.

In the forthcoming discussion I will analyse, respectively, Rollin's characterisations of Pericles, Alcibiades, and Cimon. To be sure, other Athenian and Spartan individuals are judged along the same axes as the figures I have chosen to focus on. Aristides, for instance, is praised in similar terms to Pericles. Like Pericles, his 'nobleness and greatness of soul' is starkly opposed to those 'who are incapable of acting in concert with their colleagues, and [who are] solely intent upon engrossing the glory of every thing to themselves; always ready to sacrifice the welfare of the public to their own private interests'.[126] As we will see, Rollin also praises Pericles' ability to act always in accordance with the welfare of the public. Rollin pours scorn on Cleon for tainting public affairs with vices: 'he [Cleon] introduced among the orators, and all those who interfered in the affairs of state, an ungovernable licentiousness and a contempt of decency: a licentiousness and contempt, which soon introduced terrible irregularities and confusion in public affairs'.[127] As we will see, Rollin similarly lambasts Alcibiades for allowing his own vices to dishonour his office and for showing a contempt for the affairs of state. I have therefore decided to focus specifically on Pericles, Alcibiades, and Cimon because the moral characterisations Rollin reserves for each of them vary. They constitute a fairly

[126] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 260-1.
[127] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 313.

representative sample group because between their various characterisations there is a spread of praise and condemnation, and this provides an accurate cross-section of the moral criteria Rollin subscribes to when judging individuals.

Luxury in public and private spheres at Athens

A major *raison d'être* of the new arguments seen in the eighteenth-century luxury debate was a rich tradition of social theory concerning distinctions between public and private.[128] Though Rollin does not necessarily contribute anything new to this debate, he nonetheless exhibits an awareness of the need to distinguish between these two categories. Where his assessments of the behaviour of prominent individuals—mostly statesmen—are concerned, the notion of a separation between public and private spheres of activity permits Rollin to rank their actions according to the range of benefits, or indeed disadvantages, they bring to both or either. For Rollin it seems that wide-ranging public benefits always trumped narrow and exclusive private ones. He was certainly unsympathetic to the attempts of several of his contemporaries—like Melon and Mandeville—to legitimise the unbridled pursuit of private interests. As a great admirer of ancient, particularly Spartan civic virtue, Rollin does tend to praise individuals who pursue the public good at their own expense and likewise condemn those who invariably place their interest before that of others. The host of qualities that comprise luxury's lexical field, like vainglory, ambition, greed, and avarice, function as key requisites for a negative assessment of certain individuals. But as we will see Rollin—perhaps by virtue of his religious position but also as a result of his reliance on Plutarch, particularly for the character of Alcibiades—also shows that an individual's morality can be regarded as a composite embodiment of virtue and vice. The range of qualities and actions Rollin chooses to emphasise

[128] See: Keohane. 1980. pp. 111-18.

in the individuals he represents form part of a spectrum of moral behaviour that illustrates both luxury's potent power to corrupt, but also individuals' capacity to resist it.

Across public and private spheres, we can regard the two opposite poles of this behavioural spectrum as perfect disinterestedness, at the one end, and contemptible avarice, at the other. In the sense in which Rollin uses it, disinterestedness is, broadly, the rejection of self-serving individualism. It is a quality attached to politicians like Aristides and Pericles, whose conduct in public office is made to stem from a desire to pursue the public good, which can be construed as the national interest, despite antagonistic forces that emanate from both public and private spheres. Pericles, for example, once having attained 'the whole authority' following Thucydides' exile,[129] refuses to 'submit or abandon himself any longer to the whims and caprice of the people, as to so many winds…without departing however from the public good'.[130] In the same breath, Rollin ascribes to Pericles a 'noble and disinterested soul'.[131] In Pericles' case, this disinterestedness is explicitly founded in his handling of money, and his conduct in public office is all the more worthy of admiration because it extended to his conduct in private, too.

> Pericles knew much better the use which a statesman ought to make of riches. He was sensible that he ought to expend them in the service of the public, in procuring of able men to assist him in the administration, in rewarding and encouraging merit of every kind…to which doubtless, either on account of the exquisite joy they give or the solid glory that results from them, no one will be so thoughtless as to compare the expenses lavished away in entertainments, equipages, or gaming. In this view, Pericles managed his estate with the

[129] The reference here is to Thucydides, son of Melesias, not Thucydides the historian.
[130] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 287.
[131] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*

> utmost economy… confining himself and his family to a decent subsistence (from which he banished severely all superfluities of a vain and ostentatious kind).[132]

An integral component of disinterestedness is therefore the employment of money in the service of interests that truly benefit the state. Rollin sets up a clear juxtaposition between investing in the long-term prosperity of the state—by strengthening it with individuals of merit and capability—and investing in momentary, superficial displays that serve only to project the edifice of prosperity. Pericles is accredited for his ability to pierce through the specious veil of luxury and act according to principles Rollin deems to be superior. It is no coincidence that Rollin's choice of words here corresponds to those he uses when outlining his conception of the utility of historiography in the *Method of Teaching*. History is necessary to teach us how to discern between 'solid greatness and vain ostentation', and Pericles' use of riches to invite 'solid glory', as opposed to 'superfluities of a vain and ostentatious kind' pays direct homage to this distinction.[133] That Rollin's assessment of Pericles actually mirrors his choice of words in the *Method of Teaching* speaks to the idea that his characterisation of Pericles has a designated, didactic purpose. Also, key to Rollin's depreciation of luxury is the imagery of a dazzling edifice, embodied in opulent public displays and personal adornment, drawing our attention to the idea of luxury as a deceptive, purely cosmetic phenomenon. The qualities Rollin chooses to emphasise in Pericles serve a deliberate, didactic function: Pericles' conduct is exemplary because it is a demonstration of a statesman repudiating personal ambition and rejecting luxury publicly and privately.

The superiority of Pericles' conduct is made to conform to yet another of Rollin's maxims: namely, that proper statesmanship is a skill acquired through good example. In Book

[132] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 286.
[133] Rollin. 1803. p. 232.

V, under the heading 'Illustrious men who distinguished themselves in the arts and the sciences' Rollin claims

> it was an excellent custom among the ancients, and which it were to be wished would prevail among us, that the young men ambitious of public employments particularly attached themselves to the aged and experienced persons… who, by their conversation and example, could teach them the art of conducting themselves, and governing others with wisdom and discretion.[134]

Pericles' education gave him a 'strength and greatness of soul which raised him above an infinite number of vulgar prejudices and vain practices generally observed in his time'.[135] He serves as an in-text example of one of the putative aims of the *Ancient History*: to show how exposure to exemplary principles can lead to the formation of individuals of merit. However, Rollin is clear that his conduct was driven only in part by an adherence to principles derived from a good education. Rollin held that Pericles' aversion to luxury also stemmed from a 'dread of the piercing eye of the people… [which obliged him] to refrain from most of the pleasures in which others indulged themselves'.[136] I would argue that this is more an indictment of the unconsidered nature of popular sentiment than Pericles' susceptibility to public opinion. Throughout the *Ancient History*, the Athenian populace serve as either a foil for the positive qualities of certain individuals or as sycophants to the negative qualities of others; they are flexibly employed as a tool for strengthening the moral characterisations of prominent statesmen.

[134] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 224.
[135] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 281.
[136] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 320.

It is important to recognise that Rollin's characterisation of Pericles is not purely positive, and the Athenian populace play a key part in this. Rollin condemns the means Pericles' employed to gain supremacy over his political rival, Cimon, namely his institution of pensions for public offices. Rollin interpreted these measures as the harbinger of decadence amongst the Athenians, they 'gave the people a fondness for expense and a dissolute turn of mind; whereas before they were sober and modest and contented themselves with getting a livelihood by their sweat and labour'.[137] Pericles' reforms effectively softened the Athenians to luxury by granting payments for fulfilling public duties. And these are precisely what they were: duties. For Rollin, the problem here was that Pericles' reforms served to introduce money as an end, rather than a means, in politics. This was a fear commonly articulated by luxury's detractors in the eighteenth-century. For many, 'luxury was a breach of the boundary between the economic and political spheres that threatened to corrupt the functioning of the political, thereby jeopardising the health of the community as a whole.'[138] It is the effect, but not necessarily the motive, of Pericles' reforms that Rollin is condemning. Rollin concedes that 'one of the chief endeavours of Pericles was also, to study thoroughly the genius and disposition of the Athenians, that he might discover the secret springs which were to be employed in order to set them in motion'.[139] For Rollin, it is regrettable that Pericles chose the means he did in order to attain authority because they fostered corruption in the public sphere by pandering to people's private desire for gain in the interests of the state. In turn, Rollin's characterisation of the Athenian people as 'inconstant and capricious' lends itself well to his castigation of Pericles, whose failure on this occasion lay in his neglect to perceive these qualities. Blinded by personal ambition, he brought about a reform that Rollin argues had

[137] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 282.
[138] Shovlin. 2006. p. 19.
[139] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I, p. 281.

severe consequences in the public sphere: 'it is impossible to say how fatal this unhappy policy was to the republic, and how many evils it drew after it'.[140]

Rollin is less interested in offering a consistent moral characterisation of Pericles than he is in showing up the kinds of moral behaviour that are to be either condemned or admired. Also, I would argue that Rollin's identification of a change in Pericles' character—from pandering to the populace to practicing an uncompromising form of disinterestedness—reflects a belief in individuals' latent potential to override their inherent tendencies to self-promotion and self-indulgence. In other words, to overcome the aberrations of Original Sin. Perhaps this emphasis is also designed to demonstrate that the culture of self-interest in modern French politics is reversible. Rollin wants his readers to realise that there is as much to be gained from bad example as there is from exemplary conduct and, further, that our admiration should be particularly directed at individuals who perceive the error of their ways and choose to act virtuously. An individual's, particularly a statesman's, merit effectively consists of a suppression of self, which signifies a rejection of the forms of behaviour that can be regarded as both causal and symptomatic of luxury.

In fact, for Rollin the folly of luxury lies in the irony that those who indulge in it believe it enhances their glory when in fact they stand to gain more in renouncing it:

> this common temptation of persons in power, who believe they possess it only for themselves and their families, as if the advantage of relation to them was a sufficient title…they do not reflect, that they only expose the affairs of state to ruin by their private views, but sacrifice besides the interests of their own glory.[141]

[140] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 282.
[141] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 346.

For instance, the motives of the Athenian general Alcibiades in coming out in favour of the Sicilian expedition are put down to a desire for personal gain from which he and his family would benefit.

> And indeed he [Alcibiades] carried it [luxury] to an incredible height; and lavished prodigious sums of money on horses, equipages and furniture; not to mention the delicacy and sumptuousness of his table…Extraordinary resources were necessary for supporting such luxury; and as avarice often serves as a resource to ambition, there were some grounds to believe, that Alcibiades was no less solicitous for the conquest of Sicily, and that of Carthage…to enrich his family, than to render it glorious.[142]

Here we can see Rollin building on the juxtaposition between, on the one hand, luxury as a material superficiality, and on the other, true glory as a physically intangible but more worthy pursuit. By implication, this real glory corresponds to disinterested pursuit of public duties. In commandeering a putatively public cause—the strategic acquisition of Sicily to preserve Athens' security—in service of avarice and ambition, Alcibiades merits Rollin's condemnation because he has misjudged where his true interests lie. In its superficiality, luxury carries temporal connotations, too. As a means of glorifying one's family, the grand image given off by luxury pales in comparison to the clearly more everlasting glory that individuals can attain by following the higher pursuit of public duty. As time passes, luxury's sumptuous edifice will recede whereas noble actions will retain their value.

It is precisely the public nature of Alcibiades' post that rendered his luxury divisive. As we have seen, it was common for luxury's critics to argue that luxury posed the greatest threat

[142] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 319.

when it corrupted individuals in places of authority. For Rollin, Alcibiades provided a clear and useful demonstration of this.

> Alcibiades had gained a surprising ascendant over the minds of the people…For his great qualities were united with still greater vices, which he did not take the least pains to conceal. He passed his life in such an excess of luxury and voluptuousness, as was a scandal to the city. Nothing was seen in his house but festivals, rejoicings, and parties of pleasure and debauchery. He showed very little regard to the customs of his country, and still less to religion and the gods. All persons of sense and judgment, besides the strong aversion they had for his irregularities, dreaded exceedingly the consequences of his audacity, profusion, and utter contempt of the laws, which they considered as so many steps by which Alcibiades would rise to tyrannical power.[143]

Alcibiades' indulgent habits had clear consequences for the state: they signalled a dangerous disregard for public duty that could transmute into the arbitrary exercise of political authority. Despite strengthening Rollin's contention that luxury and despotism were indicative of one another, Alcibiades serves to highlight how luxury had the power to distract individuals from the observance of laws and customs seen as integral to a state's constancy and stability. Rollin clearly regarded strict adherence to the *status quo*, in the form of laws and customs, as highly important. For instance, he is emphatic in his admiration for the culture of obedience that Lycurgus succeeded in cultivating at Sparta. Sparta's longevity and prosperity were, for Rollin, directly linked to the fact that at Sparta 'the laws governed absolutely'.[144] Sparta's stability was also the product of its excellent attitude towards education: 'their education, properly speaking, was no more than an apprenticeship in obedience'.[145] In this reading,

[143] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 317.
[144] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 397.
[145] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*

Alcibiades' errancy directly undermined public interests by holding the laws, and therefore the state, in contempt. Luxury threatened to subvert the political order by corrupting the individuals charged with its maintenance, and Alcibiades' misconduct reinforces Rollin's belief that untrammelled activities in the private sphere endanger the healthy functioning of the state.

A desirable alternative to Alcibiades comes in the form of Cimon. For instance, Rollin finds grounds for praise in his ability to refrain from over-indulgence and carry out his public duties with probity and dignity. Cimon

> possessed all those qualities that dignify the soul… [he was] a citizen zealous for the good of his country; a great politician, an accomplished general; modest when raised to the highest employments and most distinguished honours; liberal and beneficent almost to profusion; simple and averse to ostentation of every kind, even in the midst of riches and abundance.[146]

Cimon's positive characterisation rests on his ability to act virtuously in the face of luxury's corrupting power, and for Rollin it is particularly significant that he rejected luxury despite its omnipotence, occupying himself instead with pursuing 'the good of his country'. Cimon's characterisation illustrates the benefits that can be reaped from an individual's reconciliation of their own interest with that of the public, and Cimon's modesty in the public sphere is admirable because it harmonises with his private life:

> his [Cimon's] table was daily covered in a frugal but polite manner. It was entirely different from those delicate and sumptuous tables… which are covered merely to display a vain

[146] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 284.

> magnificence or elegance of taste. That of Cimon was plain, but abundant; and all the poor citizens were received at it without distinction.[147]

Frugality re-emerges as a crucial indicator of luxury's suppression, and Cimon's prudent attitude to personal economy is clearly intended as a counterfoil to Alcibiades'. A key aspect of Cimon's praiseworthy use of his wealth is also his generosity. He reserves for himself what is necessary and puts the remainder to proper use by assisting those less fortunate than himself. Cimon's virtue is thus closely associated with principles that today we would identify as humanitarian. Indeed, a major part of Rollin's didactic aims seems to be demonstrating the social utility of beneficence, which can be regarded as a corollary of disinterested behaviour. I would argue that Rollin characterises Cimon in this way to show the mutually beneficial effects of a virtuous and disinterested attitude. Cimon's being 'liberal and beneficent almost to profusion' is an exemplary demonstration of a well-handled personal economy. Cimon understood that his riches would be put to better use in the public sphere, and Rollin's praise for Cimon's largesse also shows that he did not believe that significant wealth was unacceptable *per se*. It was only when an individual's financial resources were directed towards securing an advantage exclusively for themselves—and, by extension, their family—that they became contemptible. Rollin also employs the imagery of luxury as a specious façade to reinforce his positive moral characterisation of Cimon:

> History mentions no statues or monuments erected to his memory, nor any magnificent obsequies celebrated after his death; but the greatest honour that could be paid him were the sighs and tears of the people: these were permanent and lasting statues, which are not obnoxious to the inclemencies of the weather, or the injuries of time, and endear the

[147] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 276.

> memory of the good and virtuous to the remotest ages. For the most splendid mausoleums, the works of brass and marble, that are raised in honour of wicked great men, are despised by posterity, as sepulchres which enclose nothing but vile dust and putrefaction.[148]

Cimon's exemplary moral conduct is indelible; he does not require a magnificent edifice to compensate for a reputation founded on avarice, ambition, and greed. Rollin adopts the imagery of magnificent structures that, though externally opulent, are internally void and corrupt, in order to demonstrate luxury's true character. In the *Method of Teaching*, Rollin claims that 'we seldom form a right judgment of objects that have a splendid outside, and strike the view by their external lustre'.[149] As with buildings, the true value of an individual's deeds is not measurable by their external appearance, but by the internal forces that motivate them. Rollin's choice of imagery here, I would argue, extends to the wider didactic aims of the *Ancient History*. For Rollin the essential role of history is to extract the intangible qualities which pervade the facts of which it consists. He believed the proper task of the historian is to form sound judgments on these intangible qualities, which can be identified as communicating moral precepts to be either condemned or emulated. Athenian statesmen, like Pericles, Alcibiades, and Cimon, are offered up as fecund examples from which we can extract and typify certain forms of moral behaviour. Throughout the *Ancient History* luxury accumulates a host of forceful negative connotations that permits Rollin to use it as a proof for assessing an individuals' moral value. Integral to luxury's definition is its profound connection with the private sphere. Luxury develops on the fringes of public life and acquires a new potency when it seduces individuals in positions of authority to abandon themselves to individualistic pursuits. The conception of a clear division between public and private is therefore necessary to Rollin's assessment of luxury, but only insofar as it permits him to show that luxury is at its

[148] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. *Ibid.*
[149] Rollin. 1803. p. 242.

most dangerous when the interests of both spheres are not reconciled. If luxury attempts to subordinate the public sphere to the whims of the private, what Rollin wants to demonstrate is that luxury's suppression is in the public interest. The wide-ranging benefits of a disinterested attitude that rejected luxury, in addition to supporting the public good, extended to putative private interests too because it conferred a lasting, admirable form of glory on those who practiced it. I would argue that Rollin is providing a moral analysis of the superiority of a virtue that united public and private interests in order to demonstrate how that virtue could counteract the problems presented by luxury in contemporary France.

4. Conclusion

In this dissertation I have explored luxury's role in Rollin's representation of Spartan political institutions and certain Athenian statesmen. Where other authors, like Christesen and Macgregor-Morris, have pointed out the moralising tone of Rollin's account and examined his stance on issues such as property ownership and political theory, my contribution has been to try and situate and understand the contemporary, topical issue of luxury within the context of Rollin's moralising program. I have combined preexisting scholarship on luxury's place in eighteenth-century debates, which I use to illustrate the context in which concerns about luxury and its effects emerged, with both a comparative study of Fénelon's *Telemachus* and a textual analysis of parts of the *Ancient History* in order to show how luxury's presence can be felt, not forcefully but obliquely, in a work of history that does not claim luxury as its central issue.

That Rollin felt the need to enter into such detail on a period of history the study of which had been in a relative state of decline indicates he believed there was something useful to be gained from it. Roger Zuber has claimed that in France up until about 1750, the normative status of Greek history was limited to a preferment for their 'calm, their grace, and their taste for pleasure, in addition to some models of intellectual and civic courage, particularly that of Socrates'.[150] Indeed, the *Ancient History* communicates a clear admiration for many aspects of Greek antiquity, but particularly for the moral lessons that are to be learned through its study, whether of its political institutions or famous politicians. It is not the formal aspects of institutions or the specific actions of individuals that should be emulated but rather the moral values and concerns that inform them. Rollin wants to show that, far from being a distant object of neutral fascination and intrigue, ancient history presents a series of exemplary scenes that demonstrate important moral precepts.

[150] Zuber. 1992. p. 158.

In this respect Athens and Sparta are earmarked for discussion and analysis because 'among the cities of Greece, there were two that particularly distinguished themselves, and acquired and authority and a kind of superiority over the rest, solely by their merit and conduct: these two were Lacedaemon and Athens'.[151] In Sparta's case, the moral concerns around which Lycurgus' institutions were conceived, particularly that of suppressing luxury, are reserved for particular praise. Once institutionalised, these concerns guided and nurtured an insular moral and political ethos that helped sustain and promote virtue. Rollin, like Fénelon, lauds the self-sustaining quality of virtue to show how it can act as an effective bulwark against the avaricious tendencies associated with luxury. Athenian statesmen provide a platform for Rollin to assess the relationship between luxury and the individual. Luxury's power to corrupt the state is portrayed as an extension of its capacity to corrupt individuals, particularly individuals in power, and Rollin shows that its potency inheres in its capacity to destroy a necessary harmony between public and private spheres. Rollin praises individuals who act in accordance with this harmony and he reproaches those whose private motivations encroach on public interests, and Rollin's praise for who adhere to a civic virtue that places the public good over individualistic concerns could arguably be read as a call to reinstate the idea of patriotism as a noble pursuit.

Luxury itself figures as an accommodating referential term for a host of undesirable moral qualities and vices. This capaciousness reflects how many forms of immorality that were perceived as the source of inequality in Rollin contemporary France were localised in luxury, which was often construed as a material manifestation of that inequality. The oblique figure luxury makes in Rollin's analyses of institutions and individuals shows the extent to which it was a nebulous, indeed unstable term that could loosely be associated with other ideas, phenomena, and processes.

[151] Rollin. 1842. Vol. I. p. 209.

This emphasis on the praiseworthy moral qualities that inform and underpin the institutions and individuals Rollin discusses colours Rollin's representation of Athens and Sparta in a way that increases their potential to serve as reference point for the moral issues of the day. The effect is the familiarisation of the Athenian and Spartan experiences; by bringing their various individuals and institutions into contact with the topical issues of his contemporary world—namely luxury—Rollin wanted his work to act as a morally heuristic tool which, in presenting the reader with a corpus of exemplary material apt to communicating a range of applicable maxims, would provide his audience with a touchstone for forming their own moral judgments. The didacticism of the *Ancient History* is couched in the moral qualities embodied in the examples Rollin chooses to highlight, and the importance of interpreting these examples correctly is not to ensure a veracious perspective of the ancient world, but to cultivate and promote a virtuous, almost humanitarian moral manifesto geared towards safeguarding the prosperity and integrity of human society.

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